WHAT JERUSALEM MEANS TO US

Christian Perspectives and Reflections

Edited by
Saliba Sarsar

A Publication of
The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation

Jerusalem's importance has always commanded worldwide attention and more recently has attracted greater attention and reflection. This present volume, "What Jerusalem Means to Us," is a collection of essays by authors belonging to different Christian denominations, sharing insights and experiences. These reflections on the birthplace of the Christian faith should spur the reader to meditate on the authentic and urgent call of love, justice, and peace for Jerusalem and its people. It is through a compelling and inclusive message that faith, dialogue, and unity are deepened. From Jerusalem God's Word on love, justice, and peace goes forth to the rest of the world. May this book serve as an instrument to rouse minds and hearts to carry out the Gospel with dynamic faith!

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa,
Apostolic Administrator of the
Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

An essential book to read ... Jerusalem, our Holy City, has attachments for all -- Christians, Muslims, Jews, and others. Anyone claiming that Jerusalem is only Jewish or that it's the capital of the State of Israel is fabricating history as well as ignoring Christian and Muslim presence and rights there.

Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna
Archbishop of Sevastia,
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

A true testament .... The authors join countless others in Jerusalem and beyond in witnessing for peace and justice. Even though they represent various backgrounds and follow different paths, they are united in commitment, faith, and hope for a future filled with light, instead of darkness, and for solidarity with the Living Stones, the indigenous Palestinian Christians, as they struggle to survive. Our heartfelt thanks for this important book.... Our fervent prayers for an embracing Jerusalem.

Bishop S. Ibrahim Azar
The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land

My Jerusalem, the most beautiful city in the world, belongs to humanity. No country and no religion can claim exclusivity. With a rich and diversified heritage, Jerusalem should remain an open city with access to all, with the freedom to come visit or pray if they so wish. I would like to congratulate HCEF on a job well done, and thank the authors who shared with us a valuable testimony about the holy city of Jerusalem. I encourage people from different walks of life to read "What Jerusalem Means to Us." It provides an insight to the intricate position of Jerusalem and the complexities, in hopes that more become active partners and involved in efforts to achieve justice and peace.

Claudette Habesch
Former President of Caritas MENA (Middle East and North Africa)
Former Secretary General of Caritas Jerusalem, The Holy Land

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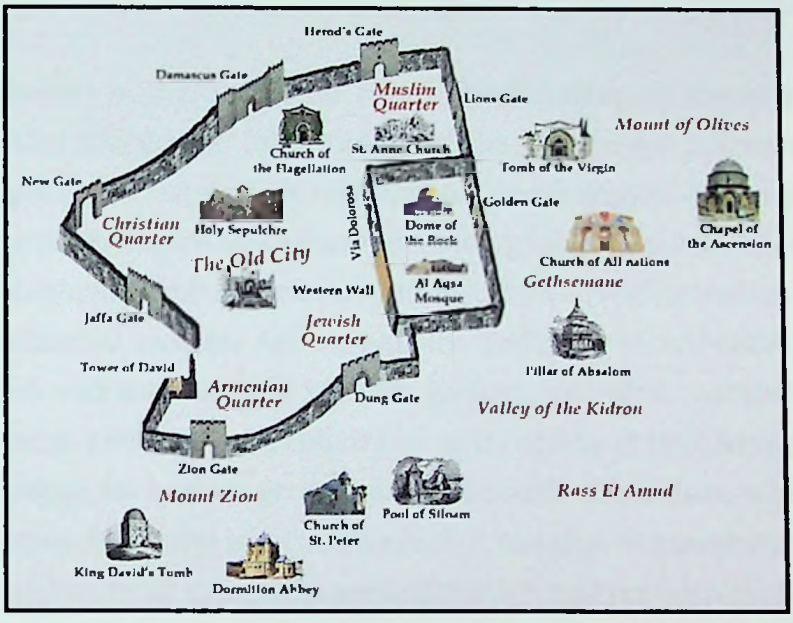

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PREFACE

Jerusalem is a city like no other. Nestled deep in the heart of three Abrahamic faith traditions, the city carries a special weight in our varying, but interrelated cosmologies. Although these cosmologies sometimes get entangled with our political aspirations, it is clear to me now, more than ever, that Jerusalem's significance extends far beyond the pettiness of humanity's selfish and exclusionary politics. Rather, Jerusalem's divinity lies precisely in its multiplicity — in its ability to hold several meanings for various groups simultaneously. Jerusalem, when we have the clarity of mind to admit it, belongs to humanity in general — to all those who seek, strive for, and pursue a higher calling in its hallowed ground; and it should remain as such for generations to come.

For me, Jerusalem has a very personal significance — for it was there that I first heard a call that has since fundamentally redirected the course of my life. The year was 1998. I was leading a group of internationals and Palestinians living in the Diaspora and travelling from Birzeit, a small Christian town in the Palestinian countryside, to Jerusalem. This was part of an international convention to support Palestine. Many of my

family members, who had remained steadfast in Birzeit wanted to send their children along with our group to pray at the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Having been separated from Jerusalem since Israel illegally occupied and annexed its Eastern part, including the Old City, in June 1967 and formally made its annexation explicit in July 1980, many of my family members had not visited there in years, and some of the younger members had never even set foot in the holy city. Because we were a group of 500, difficult to check and process, we decided that we would try to get the children through to experience Jerusalem for the first time. I recall the fervor of that moment — galvanized by a sense of divine justice, we agreed that we would take the children with us, and that if they were denied entry, we would all turn back in an act of solidarity.

Tension was high when our bus arrived at the Israeli checkpoint. Young, Israeli soldiers, no older than 21, boarded our bus with semi-automatic weapons strapped to their backs, asking passengers for their documentation one by one. Since I had agreed to be the responsible party for the children, I sat in the back of the bus along with them, awaiting our turn for inspection. In what seemed an eternity, one of the soldiers made his way to the back of the bus, stopping at each row of seats before stepping in front of where I stood. He asked for my passport, looked it over carefully, and examined the name, the date, and the visa stamp. Once he had satisfied all his protocols, he looked beyond me, at the children seated behind, again at me, and then turned around and walked away. The

entire bus held its breath as his heavy boots thudded against the floor, waiting for the tension to break. The moment the doors slammed shut, the entire bus erupted in clapping and cheering. We had gotten the children through! In the midst of my celebration, I noticed my daughter, quiet and confused in her seat. I asked her what was wrong, thinking the sight of the soldiers might have frightened her, and was surprised by what she asked me — a question that could only confound the innocent logic of a pre-teen. Why was it that she, who had come from thousands of miles away in Washington, DC with an American passport, could be allowed to enter Jerusalem, when her cousins who lived just a few miles away with a local ID were not allowed to visit a church to pray?

Later that afternoon, as I sat in one of the church's chapels, reflecting on the day's events, I was overwhelmed by the presence of God — by what I had understood to be a clear call to serve — a call to work on behalf of the persecuted church in Palestine. This call came to me with such power, with such resolve and force, that it was only weeks later that I decided to leave my business career to establish the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF), a charitable organization dedicated to supporting Palestinian Christians living in the Holy Land.

Now, 20 years out, and much older but wiser, I feel this call as strongly as ever. Short of the decision to marry my wife, no other call has so fundamentally re-directed the course of my life. And no other vocation has so inspired in me such commitment or devotion.

For me, as is the case for many others, Jerusalem is a place of magic, hope, and possibility. What is at stake in today's Jerusalem is not only a religious cause, but a human rights issue. As will be revealed in the pages that follow, Jerusalem holds a place of distinction and privilege in our collective spiritual imagination and in our personal understandings of home. All of us who claim Jerusalem as a spiritual home are joined in fellowship by its promise. Although I have the special honor of having been knighted as a Knight Commander of the Holy Sepulchre, we are all in our own way sworn to protect and serve Jerusalem's promise by preserving it for Christians everywhere, and by sharing it with our Abrahamic brothers and sisters who genuinely seek peace and cooperation. I take solace in something that Pope Saint John Paul II said during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March 2000, "In this City, it should be eminently possible for Christians, Jews, and Muslims to live together in brotherhood and freedom, in dignity, justice, and peace."[1] Not only is it eminently possible, but also it is, I believe, divinely ordained.

The world's attention is focused on Jerusalem. Christians of all backgrounds and denominations, and others, are urged to advocate for preserving Jerusalem's Status Quo and for maintaining it as the inclusive center of faith. They are strongly encouraged to stand in solidarity with the "Living Stones," the Palestinian Christians and other Christians who continue to witness in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Holy Land, as they have done for the last two millennia. "Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and

precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4-5).

HCEF is proud to publish *What Jerusalem Means to Us*, which is more timely than ever. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the book and faithfully testified to the Christian stake in Jerusalem. Their courage, openness, and steadfastness in sharing their perspectives, reflections, or stories are deeply appreciated. Special thanks are also extended to Dr. Saliba Sarsar, our editor, who has poured his heart and intellect into the development of this overdue love letter to our Jerusalem.

Sir Rateb Y. Rabie, KCHS
Founder and President/CEO,
The Holy Land Christian
Ecumenical Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The city of Jerusalem is special as it is both holy and hotly contested at the same time. It is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible, with 660 times in the Old Testament and 146 times in the New Testament.

It is called "the city of our God" (Psalms 48:1,8), "the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35). It is known by seventy names in biblical and post-biblical literature, including "sought after" (Isaiah 62:12), "joyful city" (Isaiah 22:2), "righteous dwelling" (Jeremiah 31:22), and "*shalem*" (whole) or peace (Genesis 14:18). Palestinians and others refer to it as Bayt al-Maqdis (House of the Holiness) or Bait-ul-Muqaddas (the Holy City or Holy House). Jews, Christians, and Muslims — living there and elsewhere — lay claim to it based on divine inspiration or prior human connection, association, or possession.

It is through God's revelation to humanity that it has achieved centrality, universality, and prominence. Without God and His prophets, Jerusalem would be like any other city around the world.[2] In addition to being a holy city, it is the city of humans, a living abode — imperfect, coveted, and conflicted.

During the past 4000 years, Jerusalem's history has been partly written in blood and fire. It has been "destroyed completely at least twice, besieged twenty-three times, attacked an additional fifty-two times, and captured and recaptured forty-four times.[3] Canaanites, Jebusites, Israelites, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Seljuks, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans, and British — had walked her "holy" paths and tried to make her their home, but what remains of them are mostly archives or archeological ruins! In 1948, Jordan became the ruling power in East Jerusalem and Israel the ruling power in West Jerusalem. Although Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have some influence in East Jerusalem, the whole city since 1967 has been in Israel's hands.

Today, Jerusalem is home to Palestinians (Christian and Muslim), Israelis (Jewish, Muslim, and Christian), and others. She is where they make presence and work amid constant uncertainty and, at times, in less than peaceful conditions. On December 6, 2017, U.S. President Donald J. Trump complicated matters by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel. His declaration, while pleasing to most Israelis and Jews, does not only run counter to the needs and wishes of Palestinians, other Arabs, Muslims around the world, and others, but also international consensus and laws, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions, and established principles followed by prior U.S. administrations.

Regardless, Jerusalem continues to be an evolving mosaic. Each community experiences and highlights different facets

of its spiritual, religious, historical, cultural, national, and political life. The way these are addressed will ultimately impact Jerusalem's future.

Spiritually, Jerusalem is imprinted in people's hearts. It is the center of their existence and even destiny. However, it is not an island unto itself. It is interdependent with the region and the world. The Creator's love and human compassion instruct that every community and every house of worship anywhere *is* ultimately Jerusalem. Jerusalem radiates light to all, but all equally nourishes its life.

Religiously, Jerusalem expresses, to varying degrees, the actualities and visions of the three Abrahamic faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Over the millennia, it assumed importance to their "sacred geography"[4] "This makes it very difficult for them to see the city objectively, because it has become bound up with their conception of themselves and the ultimate reality — sometimes called 'God' or the sacred — that gives our mundane life meaning and value."[5]

Historically, being one with Jerusalem evokes thoughts from the past, both old and new. It gives fertile grounds to recollections, both pleasant and not so pleasant. It considers the present and the future in the context of the land and its people, and of war and peace.

Culturally, Jerusalem is where prophets of old and their followers walked and passed on rituals, symbols, and traditions as insight and knowledge to others, and where the characters and personalities of multitudes were and are being formed.

Nationally, the way the city's residents related to each other and to their daily existence molded them. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, Arabs and Jews lived in relative harmony with each other. That began to change at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the First World War when Zionism and Arab nationalism appropriated the local identity of their communities in Palestine, creating clear distinctions with the other and differing attitudes and behaviors toward the other.[6] These distinctions became stark as blame, conflict, and wars ravaged the land.

Politically, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs do not view Jerusalem in the same way. While there are interactions between them, their proximity and socioeconomic exchanges do not guarantee close friendships or warm neighborly relations. Each community uses national arguments and counterarguments to discredit the other community. When reason and truth are most needed, they get buried under tons of contrary evidence and years of miscommunication, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding.

Palestinian Christians and Other Christians in Jerusalem

Palestinian Christians, like many other Christians, consider Jerusalem the holiest city and the center of their faith. Marking the location of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, it is the source of their meaning-making and salvation.[7] H.B. Msgr. Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem, along with the

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem (Appendix I), views Jerusalem as "the heart and spiritual homeland of every Christian living to this day whether in Jerusalem, near it, or anywhere in the world. It is where everything began, where God sent His Eternal Word, Jesus Christ Messiah, and Savior of all"[8]

Sharing Jerusalem and retaining a solid bond and influence there are de rigueur for safeguarding the Christian holy places and Palestinian Christian interests and presence. In their 2017 Christmas message, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem reaffirmed their clear position "in calling for the preservation of the Status Quo of the Holy City until a just peace agreement has been reached between the Israelis and Palestinians on the bases of negotiations and international law."[9] Responding partially to President's Trump declaration, they further argued:

> The Christians of the Holy Land know that their presence and witness is strictly related to the holy sites and their accessibility as places of meeting and encounter for unity between peoples of different faiths. It is the holy places that have given the region meaning. Any exclusive political approach to Jerusalem will deprive the city of its real essence and characteristics and tramples on the mechanism that has maintained peace throughout the ages. Jerusalem is a sacred gift, a tabernacle, hallowed ground to the entire world. Attempting to possess the Holy City Jerusalem, or confine it with terms of exclusivity, will lead to a very dark reality.[10]

Palestinian and other Christians in Jerusalem reside mostly in the Christian, Armenian, and Muslim Quarters of the Old City, in addition to other areas in East Jerusalem such as Beit Hanina, Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Joz, El-Tur, and Beit Safafa. They belong to no less than twenty religious sects that are part of four major ethno-religious communions, specifically the Latin, Orthodox, Monophysite (one nature-ite), and Protestant. Thirteen traditional churches are recognized by the civil authorities (See Table 1).

Table 1: The Christian Churches and Denominations in Jerusalem

Latin Communities:	Roman Catholic,* Greek Catholic, Armenian Catholic,* Syrian Catholic,* Maronite,* Chaldean Catholic,* Coptic Catholic*
Orthodox Communities:	Greek Orthodox,* Russian Orthodox
Monophysite Communities:	Armenian,* Coptic Orthodox,* Ethiopian Orthodox,* Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites)*
Protestant Communities:	(Anglican) Episcopal,* Lutheran,* Scottish Church (Presbyterian), Southern Baptist Convention, Church of the Nazarene, British Pentecostal Mission, Christian Missionary Alliance, Mennonite

*The 13 traditional churches that are recognized by the civil authorities.
Source: Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land. "The Churches of the Holy Land." http://popefrancisholyland2014.lpj.org/blog/2014/02/19/the-churches-of-the-holy-land.

In Jerusalem, Palestinian Christian and others who identify as Christian number 17,134 out of 856,700 people or 2 percent. The remaining population consists of 34 percent of Palestinian Muslims and 64 percent of Israeli Jews.[11]

The Christian presence is important. The churches' influence emanate from attending to the faithful, caring for the holy sites, and owning large property. The faithful, while enjoying high levels of education and a higher standard of living, remain caught in the net of the same difficulties, political dilemmas, and socioeconomic pressures that are peculiar to the region.

What Jerusalem Means to Us: Christian Perspectives and Reflections

In *What Jerusalem Means to Us*, Palestinian Christians and other Christians of various backgrounds share their personal perspectives and reflections on Jerusalem as they draw on their intimate knowledge of and or their experiences in the Holy City.

The word "perspective" denotes an interpretation, an outlook, a viewpoint that differs from one individual to another. The word "reflection" implies both a mirroring of experience and a refraction of it, which "involves distortion, facture, and (re)construction without, however, totally losing the connection with its source."[12] Hence, the book contains several approaches highlighting different facets of what I call the "Jerusalem Mosaic," mainly the spiritual, religious, historical,

cultural, national, and political. While some contributors will focus on one aspect of the mosaic, others will relate to two or more aspects of it. Even though there is diversity in perspectives and reflections, there are also connecting strands that tie the narratives together, a certain commonness or unity of love and purpose for Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

The contributors to *What Jerusalem Means to Us* were selected in a way to provide both representation of Palestinian Christian and other Christian communities and a variety of perspectives. Various cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds are also represented. There are those who were born in Jerusalem or who made Jerusalem their home. Others were born in Jerusalem or who sojourned in Jerusalem but currently live in the diaspora or back in their home countries.

As will become evident, the essays range from theological meditations and personal reflections to political thoughts and memoirs. They do not, and need not, agree on all issues. While the perceptions of the city differ, the contributors embody the conviction that the well-being of the city and all its inhabitants depend on the well-being of the other, and that all must work together, and in parallel, to build a future in which the city and all its inhabitants can thrive. Only when we allow the city to cherish its daughters and sons can it fulfill its mission. If caring, compassion, human security, peace, and prosperity do not materialize in Jerusalem — the vibrant heart of the Holy Land — where will they? If not now, when?

The Need for *What Jerusalem Means to Us*

The literature on Christianity in and Palestinian Christian and other Christians of Jerusalem is sizeable. A select bibliography appears at the end of the book. While one can find a history of Christianity (e.g., Arif Al-Arif), memoirs of Palestinian Christians (e.g., Hala Sakakini, Issa Boullata, Jacob Nammar, Bernard Sabella), studies in history, religion, and politics (e.g., Anthony O'Mahony), theological publications (e.g., Michel Sabbah, Rafiq Khoury, Naim Ateek, Mitri Raheb), and witnessing for peace (e.g., Munib Younan), one is hard pressed to find personal perspectives and reflections on Jerusalem by Palestinian Christians and other Christians contained in a single volume. *What Jerusalem Means to Us* will fill the void and be the start of serious conversations on relating to and experiencing Jerusalem as well as follow-up works on other ethnic, national, and religious communities in Jerusalem and beyond.

***

In editing *What Jerusalem Means to Us*, I have remained faithful to the authors' words and writing styles. I have added five appendices that clarify, extend, or support the ideas and arguments expressed in several essays. Those interested in further readings on Christianity, Palestinian Christians, and Other Christians in Jerusalem can access the select bibliography at the end of the book.

What Jerusalem Means to Us is a publication of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF), and it would not have been possible without the commitment and support of Sir Rateb Y. Rabie, KCHS, HCEF Founder and President/ CEO. *What Jerusalem Means to Us* is sponsored by the Coordinating Catholic Aid Organizations in the Holy Land (CCAO). Heartfelt thanks are extended to the CCAO members and Mr. Tony Khashram, CCAO Chairman; the twenty-three authors for their positive response and cooperation; Mr. Elias G. Saboura, Esq. of Noble Book Publishing Incorporated for his enthusiasm and guidance throughout the editing and publication process; Ms. Sarah Baker for her superb copy-editing skills; Professor Priscilla Gac-Artigas of Monmouth University and Mr. Yacoub Zakharia for translating from French to English Fr. Rafiq Khoury's "Jerusalem Has Taught Me;" and Mr. Khader Handal of HCEF for designing the map of Jerusalem's Old City and the book cover.

Dr. Saliba Sarsar
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1

JERUSALEM: A HOLY CITY

Michel Sabbah

H.B. MSGR. MICHEL SABBAH is Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem. He was the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008, the first non-Italian to hold this position in more than five centuries. He was born in Nazareth, studied at the Latin Patriarchate Seminary in Beit Jala, and was ordained in Nazareth in 1955. He received his doctorate in Arab philology from the Sorbonne. During his priesthood, he served in parishes in the diocese, as the diocesan youth director and the director of education, and as the President of Bethlehem University. Among his many publications is *Faithful Witness: On Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land* (Hyde Park, NY, 2009), edited by Drew Christiansen, S. J. and Saliba Sarsar.

The Nature of Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a holy city involved, as all cities in the world, in human history and all aspects of nationalism, security, war, and peace. It is holy for the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It has a universal dimension and identity. Today, it is the center of war and peace for the two peoples living in it, Palestinian and Israeli.

Jerusalem is the city of God (Psalms 134:21). It is a sign, a place of the presence of God on earth, for the common people, as well as for the political leaders. For those who believe, dealing with Jerusalem is dealing with God, not only with national or other human dimensions. Those who believe

in Jerusalem as a holy city, or those who pretend to act in Jerusalem in the name of God — as it is the case in our days, in the endless Palestinian-Israeli conflict — should ensure that their action in Jerusalem conform to the holiness of God. In their action today in Jerusalem, the political leaders and even religious believers in the holiness of Jerusalem are exactly opposed to its holiness. They are far from God.

All those who are imposing temporal sovereignty on Jerusalem, if truly they believe in its holiness, should follow only the ways of God. War is not a way of God. Hating the other, seeing an enemy in the other, is not a way of God. Killing, demolishing homes, excluding a part of its population, and trying to make Jerusalem a city only for one people — all these are not a way of God. This reflection applies to Palestinians and Israelis, and the international community concerned about the question of Jerusalem. War is not a way of God. In war, Jerusalem loses its holiness — and let not "the military" pretend that Jerusalem for them is holy — but in peace, the leaders strive with the ways of God to restore to it and its inhabitants its very nature of the city of God. This is the only way that will lead normally to the needed security and definitive peace and reconciliation. In war there is no security. When one community oppresses another, there will be no security: there will be oppression, resistance, and reprisals. Where there is justice and respect of the other, when in the holy place, the strong sees the holiness of God and the holiness of the human person created by God, then, there will be peace and security. The strong can say: this is utopia. Without war,

we cannot have security. This also means that we will remain in a situation of war, of killing and being killed, oppressing and being resisted by those who are oppressed.

The believer, using war as the only way to stay in Jerusalem, despite all the external declaration of having historical and religious rights, loses his/her own soul as well as his/her historical and religious rights. To deal with Jerusalem as any other city in the world is to make it a place of war, is to lose its true nature, and hence to lose all rights founded on its holiness.

To make Jerusalem a city for one people is also against the nature of Jerusalem. In a past period, Jerusalem was the religious center of Judaism and the Jewish people. But, history moved, and opened Jerusalem to all peoples. God, Lord of history, made Jerusalem a center of Christianity, where Christianity was born. Centuries later, Muslims came and for them too Jerusalem became holy. Therefore, Jerusalem today belongs to all — Jews, Christians, and Muslims — and to the two peoples living in it — Palestinians and Israelis — all believing in the same God, all believing in its holiness, all equal in history and in human and political life. No one can appropriate exclusively Jerusalem without contradicting its very nature as holy and city of God, and as a universal city for the three religions.

Jerusalem today is a holy city and a sign of contradiction. Instead of seeing in Jerusalem the face of God in every human being, the other is seen as an enemy to hate and to kill. Instead of all its inhabitants being equal in dignity and humanity before God, one is occupier and the other is occupied.

God is a God of love. He is not a God of death, of hatred, of demolishing houses, of excluding others. God is not "God of armies," though it is a biblical name for God. It is time to liberate God from the nationalistic, exclusivist human positions. God is God of all his creatures, including Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Either Jerusalem is a holy city or a city of war. It must be a place of living for two peoples, living in peace, making it a place of prayer, and of coming nearer to God and to all his creatures, seeing no one as enemy. But making it a place of war, making the prayer itself, the praise of God, a curse of God's creatures, whatever the reason, contradicts the nature of the holy city.

Today's reality of Jerusalem shows actions in contradiction with the holiness of God and of humanity. All interested in Jerusalem, especially for religious reasons, all those who love Jerusalem are called to stop war in Jerusalem, to go through a moment of self-purification, in order to be able to assimilate the true significance of Jerusalem, for God and humanity. They are called to liberate Jerusalem from war and death, and to make it a city of life, of salvation for all its inhabitants and for the world. This is the duty of Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community. This is the duty of all churches in the world. They are called to practice their mission of reconciliation. Churches through dialogue, through understanding of the true universal religious nature of Jerusalem, should minister in Jerusalem as agents of reconciliation, justice, and peace. They cannot neglect this ministry in Jerusalem. They should overcome

political positions and implement their prophetic role, not making anyone stronger to make war against the other, but helping everyone, to reconcile, to be secure, and to live in justice and peace.

When leaders put God, who is love and justice, in their earthly vision, then they will find peace for themselves and for the world. Jerusalem cannot be except as a source of peace and justice. If not, it will be a source of war, as it is now for itself and for the world.

Messages of the Patriarchs and Heads of Jerusalem

The Patriarchs and Heads of Jerusalem published a statement on the Christian significance of Jerusalem on November 14, 1994 (Appendix I) and a second one on September 29, 2006 (Appendix II). During the first direct talks between political leaders, they expressed also their position in a letter that was sent to the leaders on July 17, 2000 (Appendix III). A fourth formal intervention was the Churches' message from Jerusalem to Israelis and Palestinians on their 60 years, in May 2008 (Appendix IV).

The Patriarchs and Heads of Jerusalem said in their various documents and statements: "Jerusalem is a city holy for the people of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Its unique nature of sanctity endows it with a special vocation: calling for reconciliation and harmony among people, whether citizens, pilgrims, or visitors. And

because of its symbolic and emotive value, Jerusalem has been a rallying cry for different revived nationalistic and fundamentalist stirrings in the region and elsewhere. And, unfortunately, the city has become a source of conflict and disharmony. It is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab disputes. While the mystical call of the city attracts believers, its present unenviable situation scandalizes many."

"When the different sides involved now speak of Jerusalem, they often assume exclusivist positions. Their claims are very divergent, indeed conflicting. The Israeli position is that Jerusalem should remain the unified and eternal capital of the State of Israel under the absolute sovereignty of Israel alone. The Palestinians, on the other hand, insist Jerusalem should become the capital of a future State of Palestine; although they do not lay claim to the entire modern city, but envisage only the eastern, Arab part."

The Patriarchs and Heads of Jerusalem concluded by saying: "Every exclusivity or every human supremacy is against the prophetic character of Jerusalem. Its universal vocation and appeal [lead it] to be a city of peace and harmony among all who dwell therein."

"Indeed, the experience of history teaches us that in order for Jerusalem to be a city of peace, no longer lusted after from the outside and thus a bone of contention between warring sides, it cannot belong exclusively to one people or to one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all. Those who govern the city should make it "the capital of

humankind." This universal vision of Jerusalem would help those who exercise power there to open it to those who are also fondly attached to it and to accept sharing it with them.

Thus the significance of Jerusalem for Christians has two inseparable fundamental dimensions: 1. A Holy City with Holy Places most precious to Christians because of their link with the history of salvation fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ, and, simultaneously, equally holy for Jews and Muslims. 2. It is a city with a community of Christians that has been living there continually since its origins. Thus, for the local Christians, as well as for local Jews and Muslims, Jerusalem is not only a holy city, but also their native city where they live, whence comes their right to continue to live there freely, with all the rights obtaining from it. All this presupposes a special judicial and political statute for Jerusalem that reflects the universal importance and significance of the city.

In order to satisfy the national aspirations of all its inhabitants and in order that Jews, Christians, and Muslims be "at home" in Jerusalem and at peace with one another, representatives from the three monotheistic religions, in addition to local political powers, ought to be associated in the elaboration and application of such a special statute.

Because of the universal significance of Jerusalem, the international community ought to be engaged in the stability and permanence of this statute. Jerusalem is too precious to be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities, whoever they may be.

Therefore, it is necessary to accord Jerusalem a special statute that will free it from laws imposed as a result of hostilities or wars, and to be an open city that transcends local, regional, or world political troubles. This statute, established in common by local political and religious authorities, should also be guaranteed by the international community.

Conclusion

Jerusalem today is in a situation of war. It lives a situation that contradicts its nature to be holy and source of peace for its own inhabitants and all humankind. There is war because of exclusivist religious and political attitudes. True political leaders and church leaders, local and international, should consider Jerusalem, first, as a universal city, and then look at the local exigencies of its two peoples. None can appropriate it in exclusivist ways. All parties concerned should go beyond all exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, they must consider the religious and national aspirations of others in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a holy place of reconciliation for humankind.

Jerusalem is the city of God (Psalms 134:21). The cry of Prophet Jeremiah "Reform, Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 6:8) should also be heard today, and Jerusalem be founded on Justice (Isaiah 54:1-17). Either Jerusalem is a holy city, a city of God, or a city without God, and then a city of war. If God is away from

Jerusalem, and the very things of God are merely in human hands and converted only in national interests, Jerusalem will remain a city of war, of hatred, and death, demolition, exclusion, and actions against God and humans, as it is now, despite all claims of history or religion or nationalism.

Those who live in Jerusalem, and all those who love Jerusalem, have this high and difficult call, to be as holy as the city, loved by God. The Love of God, filling human hearts, will help all, Israelis and Palestinians, to reconcile and to live as equals in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem, aglow with the presence of God" (Isaiah 60:1), "ought to be a city whose gates are always open" (Isaiah 11) with "Peace as magistrate and Justice as government" (Isaiah 17).

2

WEEPING FOR JERUSALEM: A THEOLOGICAL MEDITATION

Drew Christiansen

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> *O Jerusalem, the holy city,*
> *[God] will afflict you for the deeds*
> *of your children,*
> *but again he will show mercy*
> *to the children of righteousness.* (Tobit 13: 9)

For much of its long history, Jerusalem has been for believers much more than a geographic locale or the seat of Israel's kings and conquerors. For the ancient Israelites, it was God's abode among his people. For centuries of Jews, it was a longed-for object of tribal memory. For modern Jews, it has been the center of the realization of the Zionist dream. For centuries of Christians it has been a pilgrim destination to the sites of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection and home to Christians who trace their ancestry to the time of Jesus. For Muslims, it is *al-Quds*, "The Noble Sacred Place," with Mecca and Medina one of its three holy cities, and the site of the Prophet Mohammed's night journey to heaven. Through the three monotheistic faiths, Pope Saint John Paul II reminded us, Jerusalem is the locale of God's encounter with humanity.[13]

Michel Sabbah, the Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem, has reflected on the mystery of the Palestinian Christian vocation.[14] Their calling, he contended, must be worked out amid three realities. On one side, "the holiness of the land," on another "the difficult birth of peace and justice" and on a third the "violation of the dignity of the human person, which is being perpetrated here."[15] Jerusalem is a microcosm of this struggle of God's people to live their faith in a hostile world; and it has been that way since biblical times. Jesus himself wept over Jerusalem's failure to recognize the day of its deliverance. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused!"(Matthew 23:37-38).

The prophets repeatedly took the spiritual drama of Jerusalem as a place of blessing, of infidelity and of God's mercy as a motif for interpreting salvation history. This pattern is summed up especially in the closing prayer of the Book of Tobit.[16] The prayer identifies God as "our Father forever," and like a father, "He will afflict us for our iniquities/and again he will show mercy.... he will turn to you/and he will not turn his face from you"[17] There is a movement from infidelity, to punishment (or abandonment) to repentance, and finally renewal. Lament doesn't end in sorrow but in hope of renewed relationship between God and his people who flourish in his peace.

Jesus Wept

In the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke, Jerusalem is the stage for the ultimate confrontation between Jesus and his opponents. Luke depicts the latter part of Jesus' ministry as a doom-laden pilgrimage to the city that "kills God's messengers and stones the prophets."[18] Jesus "sets his face toward Jerusalem" understanding "a prophet (should not) perish away from Jerusalem."[19] And as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city," Luke tells us, "he wept over it, saying 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes."[20] Jerusalem is a site of a cosmic tragedy, where the people of the royal city are blind to God's action in their own time, and his chosen one is a suffering hero who steels himself to his destined end.

On the ridge atop the Mount of Olives sits *Dominus Flevit* (The Lord Wept) a shrine commemorating Jesus' approach to the city at the end of his pilgrimage. From the garden wall, today's pilgrims can overlook the whole modern city with the walls of the Old City and the Golden Gate where Jews believe the Messiah will appear on the last day in the foreground. From within, the congregation looks across the altar through a picture window with a wrought-iron chalice and host superimposed on the same scene, a reminder that Christ's sacrifice continues to be offered for the holy city.

The difficult part for Christians, especially those committed to Jewish-Christian dialogue as essential to Catholic identity

in the post-Vatican II Church, is Jesus' prediction of the fall of Jerusalem:

> The days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the hour of your visitation.[21]

The prophecy seems to be a retrojected judgment based on Titus' siege and subjugation of the city in the year 70 A.D./ C.E.[22] What should have been a blessing, the visitation of a prophet bearing a message of peace has instead become a prophetic judgment against the city because of its rejection of the prophet.[23]

The motif of lamentation and destruction continues to run through Luke's account of the Passion. On the way to his crucifixion, Jesus encounters a band of women weeping for him. Their presence may be a faithful historical recollection, because women accompanied Jesus on his travels, he had women friends, Martha and Mary in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and women who had followed him from Galilee followed him to the cross and sought to complete his burial.[24]

But in this encounter the "daughters of Jerusalem" becomes a collective symbol for Jerusalem as surrogate targets of the prophetic wrath for the city that murders its prophets.[25] Jesus' dire judgment is, moreover, a transgenerational threat extending to their children, who would have witnessed the

destruction of the city by Titus. Around the foot of the cross, too, the women from Galilee, including his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene, kept watch as he died. The faithful Galilean women will also venture out in the early morning darkness to complete Jesus' burial rites. Lamentation fills Jesus' last days in Jerusalem. The women are wailing for Jerusalem as well as for him.

Again and again, Jerusalem has been the occasion for tears. The Book of Lamentations, especially chapters 1 and 2, consists of laments for Jerusalem in the wake of the destruction of the city by the Babylonians in 597.

> Oh, how God in his wrath
> Has brought darkness on the daughter of Zion!
> He has flung the glory of Israel
> from heaven to the ground,
> No more remembering his footstool
> on the day of his wrath.
> The Lord has pitilessly destroyed
> all the homes of Jacob;
> in his displeasure he has shattered
> the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
> he has thrown to the ground, he has left accursed
> the kingdom and it rulers. (Lamentations 2:1-2)

Lamentations turns the loss over and over again in a hundred different ways, bringing it before God in prayer, only briefly hinting at the end of Book 5 at repentance and forgiveness.

But you, O God, remain forever;
Your throne endures from age to age.
You cannot mean to forget us forever?
You cannot mean to abandon us for good?
Make us come back to you, O Lord, and we shall come back.
Renew our days as in times past... (Lamentations 5:19-21)

Lamentation only lasts so long before there is a change of heart and the desire arises to renew the relationship with God. In recent years theologian Bradford Hinze has proposed that the Church needs to take up lamentation as a form of religious expression for our own disappointments today.[26] Hinze was writing about the disappointments of Vatican II Catholics during the papacy of Benedict XVI. In comparison, the grief of Palestinians, and particularly Palestinian Christians, over the fate of Jerusalem must be so much more acute, beginning with *Al-Nakba,* the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the War of Israeli Independence, seventy year ago and rising to a crescendo after the collapse of the Oslo Accords in the years following the Second or Al-Aqsa *Intifada* in 2000.

The *Kairos* Palestine Movement and the Spirit of Lament

The "Kairos Palestine," a statement by Palestinian Christian leaders, in 2009 was a lament of sorts for it catalogued the ills

suffered by the Palestinian people as a result of the "Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation."[27] The injustices it described included: the separation wall, the expansion of Jewish settlements, the humiliations inflicted at checkpoints, deprivation of religious liberty and access to the holy places, the extended expulsion of refugees, prisoners indefinitely deprived of freedom, and an array of offenses committed to deny Palestinian Jerusalemites of their presence in the city. To this the *Kairos* document adds discrimination against Israeli Arabs, the loss of population through emigration, and collective punishment for acts of resistance.[28]

To all these sufferings are added the repeated failure of "the peace process," the refusal of the international community to acknowledge the legitimacy of the 2006 Palestinian elections and its double standard in enforcing international law to the region. In sum, the authors wrote, "We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe." *A way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe.*[29] That condition of desperation is what gives rise to cries of lamentation.[30]

"*Kairos* Palestine" was a cry from the heart of the Palestinian Church, released under the patronage of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. It was also an appeal to the universal church for solidarity and repentance (by Christian Zionists) and to the wider world for increased support, especially for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) initiative "in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories

and will guarantee security and peace for all."[31] Unfortunately, it was the appeal for BDS, against which the defenders of Israel launched charges of anti-Semitism that made the appeal controversial in U.S. church circles and kept it from receiving wider support.[32] Nonetheless, *Kairos* Palestine is a modern expression of lament that voices distress over the prolonged and intensifying suffering of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem who face mounting pressure on their continued presence in the holy city.[33]

> Lament brings life to the repeated pleas for justice that go unheeded by political authorities. As Msgr. Simon Kassas, speaking for the Holy See, commented at the UN Security Council on July 25, 2017, these statements "already sound like broken records. These broken records will play on," he added, "unless a viable solution to the Palestinian Question is found."[34] Prayerful lament allows our grief over the repeated sufferings of our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem to take on flesh in our hearts and cling to our being rather than shrink to hollow echoes in the recesses of memory.

In prayer, too, we place our hurts, our disappointments, our disillusionments and frustrations before God who is the fulfillment of all our hopes, our desires, and our unrealized dreams. When we address our lamentation to God in prayer, we come to an end of grieving, find a place for repentance over the part we have played in our distress, and unveil a hope beyond hope for the lasting good of Jerusalem and all the Holy Land.[35]

Just as Lamentations and the Prayer of Tobit conclude with hope in God, so *Kairos* Palestine reflects on hope. "Despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong," write the authors. "The present situation does not promise any quick solution or the end of the occupation that is imposed on us.... Despite this, our hope remains strong," they continue, "because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves." In that hope, Christians are enabled to resist injustice as they work for peace and reconciliation.[36] The hope of Christians is consistent with the experience of continued suffering in Jerusalem and Palestine more broadly. It is a hope born in a crucible of suffering and loss.

3

WHAT JERUSALEM MEANS TO ME: A PERSONAL "PRESBYTERIAN" VIEW

David A. Renwick

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I am a Christian — a Protestant, a Presbyterian, a low-church Christian. I'll call myself a "PPLCC"! For all of my early life, this meant that Jerusalem as a city was of little significance to me — until I was in my early forties. Let me explain.

In contrast to my Catholic or Orthodox brothers and sisters, and to high church Episcopalians, and indeed in contrast to Muslims and to believers in many other forms of religion, particular places are not deemed by PPLCCers to be more holy than others. Of interest — yes; but not holy.

We do not have cathedrals that have been sanctified in any way. We have church buildings that function as meeting places for the community to hear the word of God read and proclaimed. Some PPLCC church buildings, to be sure, are more elaborate than others. Some are in the shape of a cross — with a long nave and transepts — so that in stepping into

the building we are in some sense stepping into the cross of Christ. Some have high vaulted ceilings, and are intended to reflect the ark in the story of Noah (except upside down!) so that in stepping into the church we are stepping into the space in which God will save us from the flood of his judgment. Some have stained glass windows, reminding us that the story of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, can be taught visually as well as intellectually. But some, like the simple wood structures of the New England puritans, are just meeting places in which there are no stained glass windows, no cruciform shape, no high vaulted ceiling, no cross; indeed no liturgical elements but a simple communion table, a baptismal font or bowl, and a pulpit or lectern of some kind. For me and my kind, PPLCCers, none of these differences really mattered: no particular places — not even churches — are holy.

This means that PPLCCers do not generally go on pilgrimage. There are no sites or places that are more holy than any other sites. We have no equivalent of Lourdes where we can be in a place of miracles, or Medjugorje where we can be in a place of sightings; or Canterbury (as in the Canterbury Tales), where we can be in a place where there is a shrine for a great saint of old, like Thomas Becket. Indeed, we do not specifically designate any particular persons as more holy than any others.

Nor do we designate particular times or seasons as holy. There is among true, or old-line PPLCCers no liturgical calendar. Only one day is any sense holy: Sunday, treated as the Christian sabbath, and holy because it is the day of the

resurrection of Jesus. Thus, we have no feast days, and until the twentieth century, Christmas itself was not celebrated as anything special. A nod might have been given to Easter, but conventions that are now common among most Presbyterians today, such as celebrating Holy Week, or Advent or Lent were simply ignored.

There is good, biblical reason for this approach to holiness as not inherent in any time or season or person or object or place. For PPLCCers, holiness belongs in the lives of people, believers in Christ, and especially when they gather in Jesus' name. This is a view that stems from Jesus himself.

While Jesus and his family and his disciples certainly visited and worshiped at the "high church" temple in Jerusalem (see Luke 2:22-52; John 7:10-14), week by week, Jesus' regular custom was to worship in the "low church" synagogues scattered throughout the Holy Land (see Luke 4:16ff). These synagogues were not elaborate buildings, but teaching stations for the word of God to be read and proclaimed. Furthermore, Jesus himself made explicit promises, to be present not in a few solitary individuals or places, but wherever his followers were passionate to follow and obey him (John 14:23 — "*Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and* ***make our home with them***": this is a promise of God's presence with ordinary people, here on earth, not in any special places). In particular, this promised presence was given to individuals who gathered in community not only to worship but to serve and spread the gospel and build the church. Said Jesus: "*Where two or three are gathered*

*in my name, **I am there among them***" (Matthew 18:20); and, "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you, and remember, **I am with you always**, to the end of the age*." (Matthew 28:19-20). These are "portable" promises, by which Christ Jesus makes *any* time, and *any* place, *any*where in the world holy by his promised presence to be with his people.

This is the way of understanding the Scripture and the Christian life that I share with all true PPLCCers, and which profoundly influenced me through my first 35 years, and still does to this day.

In this view, Jerusalem is of interest historically, but not as a place of pilgrimage or particular holiness. Thus, I had no great desire to go to, or know about, or encounter the Christians living in the Holy Land or Jerusalem: Christ had promised to come to us wherever we were — why bother with any particular places, near or far? BUT, two things happened to change and moderate this view.

The first was biblical and theological, and ultimately incarnational. That is, while in the New Testament, Jesus makes promises to be present by his Spirit with his people everywhere, this promise in no way undoes the fact that in the Old Testament, God's people meet God ***in particular places*** in the Holy Land (such as Bethel — see, for example, Jacob in Genesis 28:10-17) and God makes particular declarations and promises about Jerusalem, so that for a period of a thousand years, from the reign of King David until the time of Christ,

God's promised presence was in fact linked to a place: Jerusalem and its Solomonic temple. According to the Book of Psalms, it is Jerusalem (often known as Zion) that is God's home (Psalms 9:11, 76:2, 84:7, 87:2, 132:13, 135:21); it is Jerusalem that God loves and longs to restore as a place of blessing for ever (Psalms 51:18, 53:6, 69:35, 87:5, 102:13,16; 126:1). Because of God's promised presence in Jerusalem, King Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53) believed that prayers prayed from and toward Jerusalem's Temple were prayers that had a direct line to God! And, years after Solomon, it was in Jerusalem and its temple that Isaiah, one of ancient Israel's greatest prophets, experienced a remarkable and powerful sense of God's presence and call (Isaiah 6:1-13).

Indeed, God's deep love of Jerusalem makes the city, its temple and its inhabitants the focal point of so much of the Old Testament prophetic and historical books. Sometimes the focus is on God's punishment and destruction of Jerusalem for disobedience, (see judgment in 2 Kings 25; Isaiah 3; Jeremiah 6, 21; Ezekiel 21; Zephaniah 1); while at other times the focus is on God's passion for the rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem (see, for example, Nehemiah 1; Isaiah 2, 27, 40; Haggai 1-2). Furthermore, when we move forward in time from the Old Testament to the New Testament it is Jesus himself who, when Jerusalem turns against him, proclaims both its judgment and future blessing in the context of God's love for it:

> *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* (Matthew 23:37-39)

In my thirties (25 years ago!) these passages about God's concrete love for and action in a particular place, began to function for me as a counter-balance to the profoundly important and true (Protestant, Presbyterian, Low Church Christian — PPLCC!) idea that God is anywhere and everywhere, by reminding me of the critical truth that God is not just spiritual (not just anywhere and everywhere), but is incarnational, and thus interested in the down-to-earth concrete realities of every-day life: life that involves real and specific people and places, and organizations and structures of justice and injustice, joy and sorrow. So Jerusalem, and the Holy Land as a whole, became increasingly important to me as a type of sacrament: a tangible reminder of the incarnation — God's specific action in real time and history taking on flesh and blood in the specific person of Jesus. To put it another way, what I came to see was that the good-news promises of "God being anywhere and at any time" depended on the specific work of God, and the life and promises of Jesus made in a particular time and place. Only because of that concrete reality of God's presence "back then and there," could I depend on God's presence "right here and now" (anywhere, anytime).

This is the tension I live with as a PPLCC! Jerusalem — in some sense is still no holier to me than any other place on earth: "The earth" — not just Jerusalem — "is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalms 24:1), but nothing undoes the fact that so much of God's work in history, in space and time, "came down to earth" there.

So now? After having had no great passion to go on any kind of pilgrimage anywhere for over 40 years, when an opportunity arose to visit the Jerusalem and Holy Land in the mid-1990s, I took it — and have returned on four other occasions.

Jerusalem is now to me a concrete reminder of God's patience with his people: that God's people are never perfect, and yet God bears with us and wants to work here on earth, with us, among us, and through us, as one of us.

Jerusalem is now to me a reminder of historical forces, tragedy and un-asked for change. The stones that lie at the base of the Temple mount, to the south of the Western Wall, lying in the same place that they lay the day after the Romans sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70, are a reminder of the power of the Roman empire — and any empire — to bring both peace and pain: crucifying an innocent man, and turning the nations of the world and everyday life upside down.

Jerusalem is now to me a reminder that the world is a place of seemingly unresolvable complexity. The mix of Jews, Christians, Muslims, secularists, in Jerusalem, each possessing a "claim," is the very world that God loves and to which he sent his son. His love for the world is no less because His Son was crucified there. This is precisely the type of world in

which God is at work and in which he calls us to serve with him.

Finally, now to me, Jerusalem is a sign of hope, a reminder of life as it was meant to be. Looking down the Mount of Olives across to the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock, the turmoil that has been and remains in Jerusalem is lost from sight, swallowed up in beauty. This is the vision, which, with God, we struggle to bring to earth. As St. John writes:

> *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."*(Revelation 21:1-5, NRSV)

4

WHAT JERUSALEM MEANS TO ME: A PERSONAL "EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN" VIEW

Richard H. Graham

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"I walked today where Jesus walked,
In days of long ago.
I wandered down each path He knew,
With reverent step and slow."

It has been a long time since I have heard those words sung. They form the first stanza of a piece of music that was once very popular. I knew it from my youth. But I have not heard it since it was sung as a baritone solo in the church where I was working going on forty years ago now.

And I remember that occasion clearly. I was serving as an associate pastor in a Lutheran congregation in the Washington, D.C. area. The congregation contained a number of military families and of members who worked in the intelligence community. People would disappear and be away from worship for weeks. In the beginning I was green enough to ask them, when I saw them again, where they had been. They always just

said, "I was working," and I figured out pretty soon I was not going to get any more information.

Anyway, the church had a great choir and one Sunday right before Easter the best baritone sang "I walked today where Jesus walked." The music evokes the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane and Calvary in a sweet, poignant, sort of old-fashioned way. That morning it fit its context beautifully and at the coffee-hour after the service the baritone was warmly and sincerely thanked. But I was standing next to him as the crowd thinned out and one of the members came up and said, "You know, this week I really did walk where Jesus walked. And I saw an awful lot of people standing around with automatic weapons. The song was great. But Jerusalem's different than you think."

If that attitude has gotten to be pervasive, it would explain why we do not hear this particular piece of music as often as in the past.

"I knelt today where Jesus knelt,
Where all alone he prayed,
The Garden of Gethsemane.
My heart felt unafraid."

Jerusalem is a place that is sacred for us because Jesus was there. It is holy in many ways, of course. The City of David, the site of the Temple, for our Jewish neighbors is the city to which they pray to return in every year's Seder celebration. Our Muslim neighbors also look to the Temple Mount known

to them as Haram esh-Sharif, where the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are located. But, for us, Jerusalem is the place where Jesus taught and was arrested, where he was tried and put to death, and where he was raised from the dead. The gospels tell of Jesus in the Old City and in many parts of the surrounding countryside. Even if the historians have taught us to be careful about saying "Jesus was right here doing this," still walking the Via Dolorosa or standing in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre can reduce the most unlikely visitor to surprising tears. There simply is no other place like Jerusalem for a sense of the presence of God and of God's only son.

And yet many people now go to Jerusalem with more than a little trepidation. It is fine to think about being unafraid in Gethsemane, but Jerusalem is a city divided, and not at peace with itself. The automatic weapons are much in evidence, and the violence in the city draws the world's attention. There are murders and assaults in every city and countryside too, for that matter. But, what happens in Jerusalem is given greater weight because every incident raises fears that the next great war will start here. Someone's claiming the right to live in a certain neighborhood, or to build a house in a certain place, can lead to riots and bloodshed. Apparently, no one can afford to back down, or to trust that the future will be better. Jerusalem seems to be the place for which too many people are prepared to die. And life seems so bitter to some people that they are prepared not just to die, but to kill.

So Jerusalem is a holy place, and a broken place. But Jerusalem is something else as well, something that a visitor

often finds amazing. Jerusalem is a real city full of decent people going about their daily lives with courage and grace. People go to work there, they shop, they eat, and they entertain. They share their lives. Jerusalem is a capital city. It is urbane and modern in many neighborhoods, quieter and older in others. There is great wealth, and there is poverty, too. Perhaps because it has been since its earliest days a place of pilgrimage, Jerusalem knows how to treat outsiders and strangers. Christians coming to Jerusalem find themselves welcomed by Jews and by Muslims with kindness and curiosity. People like to talk to strangers in Jerusalem. And Christians who will take the trouble to wrestle with a foreign language in worship find that those who share their faith in Christ are eager to greet them with a generosity that is truly humbling. (It is an enduring shame that so many Christian visitors to Jerusalem fail to connect with their brothers and sisters while they're there.)

A holy place marked by the presence of Christ.... A broken place of violence and despair.... A place of grace and courage.... Jerusalem is all of these, and so in special and intense ways it is a place like everyplace else on earth. Jerusalem is precious to many people, and it is precious to me, because it represents all the places we live. In every human community there are people going about their daily lives as best they can, caring for their families, treating their neighbors with respect. In every human community there is sin and violence, division caused by prejudice and old wrongs that somehow cannot be forgotten. And in every human community there are

traces of the love of God at work. Not noticed sometimes and often simply not looked for, these traces of God are what make human life possible, and the hope that human life can be better.

"I picked my heavy burden up,
And with Him at my side,
I climbed the Hill of Calvary
Where on the cross He died.
I walked today where Jesus walked,
And felt Him close to me."

It is a little bit sad that the old song is less frequently performed now. It leaves many things unsaid, but it still speaks to a hunger and an eagerness to be in contact with Jesus by means of the places he knew, where his work was completed and where his glory was revealed. And I hope that more and more people will indulge this hunger and go to Jerusalem. I hope more and more people will experience what is good and bad and holy about that special place. Then I hope those people will return home with eyes to see what is good and bad and holy about the places from which they have come. I hope they will pick up whatever burdens they need to carry to make their own cities safer and stronger and kinder. I hope that having walked for a little while where Jesus actually walked they will come to a renewed sense that he is with them wherever they go until, as the Bible says, the New Jerusalem is revealed from heaven and all of us live there forever.

5

JERUSALEM: THE CITY THAT WITNESSES GOD'S LOVE

Ramzi Sidawi

FR. RAMZI SIDAWI, OFM, is a Franciscan of the Holy Land. He was born in Jerusalem into a Catholic family in 1972. After graduating from high school, he joined the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. In 2002, he was ordained a priest and then went to Rome where he obtained his doctorate in Dogmatic Theology from the Pontifical University Antoniaum. He was the parish priest of Jaffa and director of the Terra Santa Boys School in Jerusalem. Currently, he is the general treasurer of the Custody of the Holy Land.

It is not easy to write about the City of Jerusalem. You may say a lot of things about it from many viewpoints and many perspectives: religious (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim), political (Palestinian, Israeli, and Arab), historical, and archeological. But as a Christian who was born in Jerusalem, as a Franciscan friar who lives and works in it, as a priest and as a theologian, the most important aspect for me is that Jerusalem is there to witness the love of God for us. Within its boundaries, God accomplished the mystery of our Salvation and completed His revelation to mankind. In it, the Love of God went beyond any expectations and he gave Himself for us. Thus, he reconciled mankind definitively with Him and reopened the doors of Heaven.

Along the centuries, Jerusalem lived the most crucial moments of the history of Salvation. It was especially during the period of the Kingdom of David, one thousand years B.C., that God chose to live in Jerusalem, in the Temple, and be present among His people. In this way, the city became at the

center of the story of God with his people. When the Son of God incarnated, He reserved a special place for Jerusalem in his preaching and He came to the city to fulfill God's will. He was crucified and resurrected and ascended to the Heavens from this city. In this way, Jerusalem remained at the center of the story of God with His people, and conserves within its monuments the memory of these events.

Going around the city, many places talk to us and tell us the story of what happened there. Descending the Mount of Olives, we can find the Church of Dominus Flevit, the place where Jesus wept over the future fate of the city. Further down, Gethsemane comes into view. It is where Jesus passed his agony, where he was arrested and led to be judged. Entering the Old City through St. Stephen's Gate, we see the Monastery of the Flagellation where Jesus was imprisoned, flagellated, and condemned to death. We then pass through the Via Dolorosa where Jesus carried the cross to Calvary. At the center of the Old City, we have the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the holiest place for Christianity. It is here where Jesus was crucified and died, and the Holy Tomb where he was buried and resurrected from the dead after three days. In the Old City, we also find the Cenacle, also known as the "Upper Room," where Jesus had his last supper with the Disciples and where the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples and the Virgin Mary on Pentecost. Going back to the Mount of Olives, we find the Chapel of Ascension, the sacred site from which Jesus ascended to Heaven forty days after resurrection. In it we also have the place where Jesus healed a man born blind and

a paralytic. In Jerusalem, Jesus had many discussions with the Pharisees about the Kingdom of God. In other words, every single stone or street in it reminds us and talks to us about what happened.

But the monuments that are conserving the places of these key events are not simple stones that conserve a moment of history. They conserve the mysteries that happened there, the events of our salvation. These mysteries continue to be alive, and they are perpetuated in all places and in all times through the faith and the work of the Church. These mysteries do not belong to the past, they belong to the present and the roots where they took place are conserved within the stones of Jerusalem. Thus, the city conserves and is a witness of all that happened and of what God did for the reconciliation of mankind with him.

This reconciliation is the one that gives the real peace to mankind. With the resurrection of the Lord, the new creation is finished, and mankind has the real hope of entering to Heaven. With the light of the Risen Lord, mankind can see his reality and accept it, and thus, finally have true peace in his heart. In fact, without the good relationship with God, mankind will continue to struggle with himself and with his brothers and sisters searching for peace of heart and mind. Without the resurrection of Jesus, mankind was as if he was searching in complete darkness for a way to escape from prison and the light of the Risen Lord gave him not only the possibility to see, but also showed him that the gates of his prison are opened.

This grace can only come from God and from the mystery of our redemption that occurred in Jerusalem.

In the future, no matter what will happen, Jerusalem will continue to conserve and witness all these events as it did in the past. And the reason is that the events that happened in it are so fundamental for the history of all mankind that no power will be able to cancel them. And the city will be there always to witness these events and tell the story of what God did for all of us.

Jerusalem will always witness that God loves all of us, that God started a story with mankind, that He revealed himself when He became flesh, suffered, died, was buried and resurrected, and ascended to Heaven. The reason: His love for us and His will that all mankind can know and receive this love. This message has no time limits and no boundaries; it will remain forever.

Nevertheless, Jerusalem still lives big contradictions. On one side, it is the city of peace, the city of the complete reconciliation between God and mankind, the city of the Love of God for us. On the other, it remains the cause and at the center of conflict between people. Looking at the situation from a lay perspective, a natural question is: how can the city of peace and the city that is supposed to give peace be the cause of many problems and conflicts, even wars? Somebody who does not know the city from inside or who does not belong to one of the three monotheistic faiths will find it difficult to understand how Jerusalem can be the city of peace and at the same time the center of conflicts.

Jerusalem, being so important for religions and people, attracts everybody. The contradictions and conflicts are a sign that others, even though they belong to different faith traditions and ethnic groups, did not yet achieve the full reconciliation and still need to continue the laborious work to achieve peace. Furthermore, they are not able to accept the idea of sharing the city and the fact that there is a place for everybody in it.

Many people from all over the world dream to visit Jerusalem for religious or historical reasons. Some even wish to live there. Many of them remain fascinated by the city that they revisit it countless times. They feel as if something keeps on attracting them and calling them back. They cannot stop the desire to experience living within its stones and walls.

From a Christian viewpoint, every faithful needs to come at least once in a lifetime to visit the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem. Such a visit is important as it is the return to the roots of one's own faith. Visiting the sites enables the faithful to understand the Gospel, thus living it in a different and more positive way. It will open new dimensions and make possible the deepening of faith.

We look forward with hope and joy. We know that God will give us His peace according to his will. Jerusalem, which lived the most important events of the love of God for us, will be there to witness this love and sustain our hope in a future full of goodness and peace.

6

HOLINESS TO STRIVE FOR

Carole Monica Burnett

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There it was, the original "city on a hill" — not just one of many legendary cities, but the geographic center of the Biblical narratives that have shaped my life as a Christian. I took my first look at the Old City of Jerusalem after thirty-six hours of sleep deprivation due to a postponed flight, and yet I could not close my eyes for several more hours as I gazed again and again across the moonlit Valley of Hinnom from my window at St. Andrew's Scottish Guesthouse. Although I had always known that the events of salvation history, through which God revealed Himself to humanity, had occurred in actual physical locations — not in some fictional, fairy-tale landscape — nevertheless it was an indescribable thrill to find myself transplanted to the foremost of those locations, the same rocky ground on which Jesus taught, healed, sacrificed Himself, and rose again, "trampling down death by death," as we sing in the Orthodox Church.

Mine is of course a common reaction among first-time pilgrims. Religious awe and delight are to be expected when a

Christian first encounters "the fifth Gospel," as the Holy Land is sometimes called. In the course of my return visits, however, I became aware of two pitfalls to which lovers of the Bible can be vulnerable. Both are fueled by romanticism.

The one that affected me resulted from the hunger to feast my eyes on the very same sights that Jesus had looked upon, and, before him, King David and the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. Not only was the Western Wall at the Temple Mount (or Haram esh-Sharif) a tangible connection with Biblical times, but Hezekiah's Tunnel brought to life the story of the Assyrian siege against the city seven hundred years before Christ. Sunrise over the Mount of Olives was an experience that I could share with prophets and apostles in my imagination across the centuries.

Before long, however, the pitfall of disillusionment descended on me. Much of what I saw was a proliferation of churches and shrines adorned with oil lamps, mosaics, and stained glass, and swarming with pilgrims and tourists. The terrain seemed to have lost its resemblance to the environment in which the people of the Bible had walked. As a result, I developed a feeling of alienation from the holy sites, cynically regarding them merely as tools of the tourist industry. Such was the consequence of religious thrill-seeking.

Eventually I understood that my desire to journey backward in time to a pristine Biblical landscape was silly and futile. After all, our knowledge of the Biblical setting is incomplete: archaeologists are still discovering ever more structures that were erected by the inhabitants and conquerors of the Holy

Land throughout history, and therefore the horizon that met the eyes of Jesus may not have been as I had envisioned it. Moreover, the ornate shrines and churches built in post-Biblical times are powerful expressions of passionate devotion, the prime example, of course, being St. Helena, the matriarch of the Christian architectural legacy in the Holy Land. By surrendering myself to their beauty, I could participate in the ancient traditions witnessed by the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria and those who followed her. I could join my prayers to the continuous chorus of voices raised to heaven by pilgrims throughout the millennia. Standing on the site of the Holy Sepulchre while praying the Trisagion Prayer ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us," which dates from the fifth century or even earlier) cemented my unity with generations upon generations of Christians.

The other major pitfall is one from which I stand aloof because I grieve over its effects. It is the romantic desire to re-enact the narratives of the Old Testament, specifically the books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings, in order to re-create the nationalist glory of the kingdom of Judah prior to the Babylonian Exile, thereby establishing the supremacy of one particular ethnic group in the land. Some extremists, both Jewish and Christian, even aspire to demolish existing structures to construct a Fourth Temple in Jerusalem, complete with animal sacrifices. Such religious fantasies have propelled or condoned the grave abuses inflicted on the Palestinian people. I have seen firsthand the results of rampant disregard for human rights, such as hours of checkpoint delays,

arrests and imprisonment without any legal charge, and land confiscation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The slogan "Death to Arabs," scrawled on Jerusalem walls, has defaced the city. Such hate speech and violations of human rights have been bolstered by religious imaginations that have run amok.

Rejecting both of these two varieties of wishful thinking, I have chosen to focus not on recapturing the past, but on the way forward for Jerusalem. How can this venerable city fulfill its potential to become a place of "prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7), a reflection of God's will for humanity, and a haven of safety not only for survivors of European persecutions (though certainly to include these children of God), but also for everyone? Here in the United States we often discuss the challenge of diversity in our society, yet in the Holy Land that challenge is far greater — formidable, in fact. Competing claims on real estate, feelings of victimhood, and notions of ethnic or religious superiority exacerbate the usual tensions that arise from drastic differences between diverse groups living in close proximity. These obstacles are daunting indeed. Recalling that Jesus wept over Jerusalem — lamenting, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you," and "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes" (Luke 13:34 & 19:42) — we might be inclined to despair of this city, seemingly so unholy at times.

God has His own plans for Al Quds, the Holy City, which are revealed in the striking descriptions of the New Jerusalem in the New Testament Book of Revelation and in the Old

Testament prophecy of Isaiah. Revelation 21 describes a city where the love of God illuminates the streets and dwellings:

> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it... (Revelation 21:22-24)

In Isaiah 65 the Lord speaks:

> I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
> and be glad in my people;
> No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
> and the cry of distress...
>
> The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
> and the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
> and dust shall be the serpent's food.
> They shall not hurt or destroy
> in all my holy mountain,
> says the Lord. (Isaiah 65:19, 25, RSV)

Certainly these texts impart an impossible ideal, a utopian vision of perfect harmony and joy — a vision impossible for human nature even to approximate without God's help. Merely taking the first step requires consciousness of human dependence on God in conjunction with persevering fortitude

in the struggle to attain mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation amidst radical diversity. Unflagging awareness that "the other" has been created in God's image, as well as a constant stream of prayer, must accompany nonviolent action and advocacy.

The struggle cannot be confined to the city of Jerusalem, or even to Palestine and Israel, or even to the Middle East. All people who worship the one God, the God of Abraham, must become involved. In the past, sincerely religious people have honored the Holy City in countless works of poetry, architecture, art, and music. The walls of Catholic churches display the Stations of the Cross, derived from Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa. Protestant hymnals contain numerous references to the Holy City. During Lent, Orthodox Christians regularly sing Psalm 137 (136 in the Orthodox Bible), which proclaims fidelity to the remembrance of Zion and to honoring Jerusalem above all other joys. Jews exclaim, "Next year in Jerusalem!" The walls of many Muslim homes and businesses display photographs of the Dome of the Rock. All of these forms of veneration are to be cherished, but they are not ends to be pursued for their own sakes. Rather, they are means of inspiration for offering our service to the Lord. That is to say, meditations based on images and narratives of Jerusalem can lift our hearts to the Lord, but it is important to nurture an active connection to the Holy Land also. We can and should manifest our devotion by means of concrete action on behalf of people who are suffering the effects of the violence and forced homelessness that are desecrating the city.

What can Americans do? Plenty! In meetings of faith communities and civic organizations we can educate our fellow Americans about the causes of the tensions in the Holy City, presenting a holistic rather than a one-sided narrative. We can purchase fair-trade goods and invest preferentially in business enterprises undertaken by residents of the Holy Land, most especially by those who are excluded from the privileged class. Above all, we can and should continually draw the attention of our press and our government to the needs of the displaced and marginalized. Let us write with dogged persistence to government officials and newspaper editors and make telephone calls to Congressional offices when plans are announced for the construction of additional settlement units or when the news from the Holy Land has been reported or analyzed in a biased way in the media. Let us be watchdogs to ensure that those in positions of influence are not permitted to overlook Jerusalem.

And what about the sacred history of this city and its environs? Immersing ourselves in contemporary issues, while abstaining from zealous fantasies about recapturing past glories, is not a mandate to forget the past. On the contrary! It was here that King David danced jubilantly before the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence with His people, which he had just retrieved from the Philistines. About five centuries later, Jeremiah spoke startling truths to the Jerusalem authorities, prophesying that God would establish a new covenant. After six centuries had passed, the Savior with His own blood initiated this New Covenant of invincible divine

love for all humankind, and soon afterward the Holy Spirit descended upon a diverse multitude of visitors to Jerusalem who had come from many nations of the earth. The accounts of these and many other instances of God's intimate involvement in human events belong to the personal history of every Christian and to the history of the world.

In this place, so holy and yet so unholy, the past is a source of hope for the future. God, who became incarnate and walked on earth — in this city — shall surely act again and again, and His will shall prevail through the inspired efforts of His servants. As Psalm 85 assures us,

> Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
> righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
> Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
> and righteousness will look down from the sky.
> (Psalms 85:10-11)

The faithfulness that will arise from the ground must come from human beings. Let us serve as God's hands and feet on earth in the fulfillment of His holy will for His holy city.

7

A REFLECTION ON JERUSALEM: A DIVIDED CITY BUILT ON HOLY GROUND

Marie Dennis

MS. MARIE DENNIS is Co-president of Pax Christi International. She is a prime organizer of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and was for many years director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Marie was named the 2016 Person of the Year by the National Catholic Reporter and was a Public Peace Prize laureate, also in 2016. She is a lay woman, a mother of six, and a member of Assisi Community in Washington DC. She received honorary doctorates from Trinity Washington University and Alvernia University, is author or co-author of seven books, and a sought-after public speaker.

> "And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"
>
> (Luke 19: 41-44)

Jerusalem feels like the Home of everybody -Christians,
Muslims, and Jews.
You can find me and I can find you, since it is
the bridge of peace to all
Whoever you are,

That is what is special in Jerusalem -
once you are there you belong to it.
That is why I am always mad about it, I do not want
the peaceful and free land to become
a big prison and the stage of war and blood.
I don't want to be separated from my capital
Which is just a few kilometers from Bethlehem and other
Palestinian villages and cities.
I need Jerusalem to be free, to be without Walls,
checkpoints, and settlements.
I need my people to live without fear, frustration, and tears.
I need to enter Jerusalem without a permit.
I have the right to visit my family and friends.
I need to pray every Sunday and Friday in Jerusalem
where my Holy places are.

(Rania Murra, Pax Christi International
Board member from Bethlehem)

Not long ago, as we sat for a few minutes in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem on the route of Jesus' Way of the Cross, we were struck by the presence of ten young heavily armed Israeli police on the other side of the intersection waiting for trouble. Their threatening presence was accentuated by hundreds of Israeli flags flying from the top floors of houses in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City.

Later, we looked at Jerusalem from an upper porch in the Armenian Quarter and listened to the experience of an

Armenian family friend whose description of shrinking space in the Old City — of his community being psychologically crushed — was heartbreaking.

Tragic also was the recognition that the popular tourist site where we enjoyed a magnificent view of Jerusalem's Old City held the memory of four Israeli soldiers killed shortly before our visit by a Palestinian who, after he rammed his truck into the soldiers, was himself shot to death.

For a city built on holy ground — for Muslims, for Jews, for Christians — the shadows of violence and death, of occupation and fear, overwhelm. We Christians claim that death does not have the last word and there is no place on earth where evidence of that should be stronger. But even the sacred place of Resurrection itself seems unable to stand up to the ongoing crucifixion of Palestinians and Israelis who seek a just peace.

Jesus' words remain incredibly relevant: *Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.*

Broken relationships are part of the human condition — dividing families, institutions, neighborhoods, nations, the global community. The fractures and divisions are only too evident; the need for healing and wholeness only too obvious; but the way to repair and reconcile seems obscure and beyond our reach.

At the heart of the Christian faith there is a source of wisdom to help us find the way towards reconciliation and peace. *Christ Jesus is our peace. He has broken down the dividing wall, the hostility between us...* (Ephesians 2: 14). Other faith traditions

also carry sources of wisdom and hope. But for Jerusalem, a city marked by fear and dividing walls, the possibility of reconciliation seems impossibly remote.

Pax Christi, a Catholic peace movement born out of the suffering and divisions of war, was shaped by specific acts of reconciliation. It began in the south of France in the summer of 1944-45 while the Second World War was still in progress. A small group of Christians who had lost husbands, fathers, and children began meeting to pray for their enemies. Then Marthe Dortel-Claudot, the teacher who had started the prayer group, asked the local bishop for his support. Bishop Theas readily understood the demanding challenge of reconciliation. In 1944, while detained in a prison camp for protesting against the deportation of Jews, he had preached the Gospel command to forgive enemies. He agreed to become president of the Pax Christi movement which quickly spread, first of all to Germany, then to the rest of Western Europe. Now Pax Christi has 120 member organizations on five continents working for reconciliation and just peace in many different ways.

Pat Gaffney, General Secretary of the British Section of Pax Christi, remembers her first impressions of Jerusalem: "In literature and art Jerusalem maintains a huge presence, as it does on first encounter. For me this was in 2003, visiting as part of a Pax Christi International delegation. Always reluctant to visit because of the juxtaposition of violence, division, and religion, the atmosphere and story of the Old City were both enthralling and haunting, especially when visited early in the morning and late at night before the crowds arrived. A place

I have the right to enter Jerusalem it is part of my land, if you want peace build bridges not walls. If you call for human rights, treat others the way you want to be treated. Imagine that the old man in this story is your father!!

Two days ago my daughter had an appointment with a doctor in Jerusalem at 11am, so we were obliged to go to the checkpoint at 9:30am even though it is just 15 minutes from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. When my daughter and I arrived at the checkpoint it was closed; the soldier was in his box but he wouldn't look at us. In a loud voice I said that we had an appointment with the doctor but no one cared, so we slipped through a small space by the electric gate. The soldier shouted at us asking for our permits. I showed him our permits and we continued until we reached the other station where you have to take off your shoes, belt, eyeglasses, coins, watch, anything metal and put them through the machine. This is the daily life of Palestinian workers and people going to Jerusalem. Finally, we arrived at the last point where the soldiers check permits, magnetic cards, and fingerprints.

Here the story usually ends but this time it got worse. Near the end of the checkpoint we met an old Palestinian man in his 70s who had been refused entry by the soldier. He begged me to talk to the female soldier and her boss. He asked me to tell them that he needed to see a doctor in Jerusalem and that since he was older than 45, according to Israeli law, he should be allowed to enter Jerusalem without a permit. He showed me his papers from the hospital written in Hebrew. I tried to translate for the soldier but the boss threatened to send me home if I continued interfering. I looked in the eyes of the old man. He was about to cry — he was old and the soldier and her boss were young; he was a man and the soldier was a woman; he was without weapons and they had many; he was the one who owned the land and they were the occupiers. I had to leave while the old man was still shouting, with his eyes full of tears and anger. My daughter was so sad and afraid watching this kind of humiliation and injustice.

(Rania Murra, Pax Christi International Board Member from Bethlehem)

of promises unfulfilled and questions begging for answers. Jerusalem — a new heaven and a new earth: the potential to be a place of peace, unity, diversity, justice — carrying the weight of political and spiritual aspirations of many. Jerusalem — where the 'faithful' at church, mosque, synagogue are 'protected' by soldiers, police rifles."

Reconciliation remains at the heart of Pax Christi's work for peace. Christ as the source of reconciliation is the central focus of an ICON made specially for Pax Christi International and gifted to our movement in Jerusalem in the summer of 1999, immediately following an international Council meeting that brought together Pax Christi members from around the world.

We had just elected Patriarch Michel Sabbah as our International President and had re-committed our movement to work more urgently to build peace and justice in Israel and Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, which are brutally torn apart by years of war. Suddenly in our midst was this stunning ICON of Peace, offering through its images both challenge and hope. The title of the ICON, "Christ is our Reconciliation" is written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

At the heart of the ICON are the brothers Esau and Jacob, sons of Isaac. Esau was the elder son and should have inherited his father's wealth and position but Jacob cheated Esau out of his inheritance. In the ICON, their hands are stretched to embrace one another and they are standing on the sword, a symbol of the anger and brokenness that had defined their

ESAU
JACOB
καυχώμενοι διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ
RECONCILIATIO NOSTRA CHRISTUS EST
המש"ח משכ"ן שלום בל"בנו

lives for so long. They have journeyed a long way and the one who was hurt offers reconciliation to the other.

Immediately above and below them in the ICON are images of Christ, the source of our reconciliation, liberation, and peace. Christ, rising above the Heavenly Jerusalem — a city of peace, and teaching his disciples how to pray. In the Book of Revelation, the writer describes a vision of a new heaven and a new earth — a new city of Jerusalem. The city shone like a rare jewel and had a high wall with twelve gates. It needed no Temple, as the earthly Jerusalem, because God himself was there, with Jesus. The gates were never shut and the nations brought their glory and honor into the city: they were reconciled and at peace with each other. The message is about being able to have peace on earth, as in the heavenly Jerusalem. At the foot of the picture, "Our Father" is written in the Aramaic language, probably the language Jesus spoke and which lives on in the Aramaic church.

Ten other images are presented in the ICON:

1. Saint Stephen, a preacher in the early church and the first Christian martyr.
2. Mary Magdalene, a disciple of Jesus who was the first to see him after the resurrection. Jesus told her to go and tell the other disciples that he was alive but they refused to believe her because she was a woman.
3. Saints Boris and Gleb, well known among Eastern Orthodox Christians — the sons of St. Vladimir of Russia. Their older brother wanted the land their father had given them, so he set out to kill them. They refused to take up weapons to defend themselves because they believed that, as Christians, they should not take up arms to kill others.

4. Sofia, a saint of the Eastern Church, a Christian widow, living in Rome with her daughters, Hope, Love, and Faith (from left to right in the picture). The Emperor Hadrian commanded them to be sacrificed to the goddess Artemis, because they were Christians. They were tortured and beheaded and are martyrs who demonstrated great faith.
5. Saint Francis and Saint Clare, well known for their commitment to the poor, to equality and to nonviolence. During the Fifth Crusade, which he vehemently opposed, Francis traveled with his Franciscan brother, Illuminato, to Damietta, Egypt to meet Malik al-Kamil, the Sultan who was leader of the "enemy." Francis spent many months with the Sultan, whose ideas were evident in Francis' writings in subsequent years.
6. Sarah (with Isaac) and Hagar (with Ishmael), mothers of sons sired by Abraham, who was promised by God that he would be the father of a great race. Sarah and Hagar were never reconciled. Both the Jewish and Muslim people claim to be descended from Abraham through his sons Isaac and Ishmael.
7. Jesus with the Samaritan woman, the non-conforming "outsider" who, after her encounter with Jesus that was transformative both for the woman and for Jesus, publicly proclaims Jesus the Messiah to both men and women in her village.
8. Jesus with the Syrophoenician woman, whose persistence challenged Jesus' initial bias against Gentiles. Jesus listened to her and changed his mind, finally healing her daughter and expanding his own commitment to inclusiveness.

Reconciliation is never easy. It is a process of listening, standing in the shoes of another, being prepared to take risks,

taking the first step, being open to change, being prepared to sacrifice something of oneself. The stories offered in the ICON express all of these.

Jerusalem patiently waits for reconciliation, the heart of peace. A still-divided city, it yearns for that time when its people will understand the things that make for peace and begin to experience the healing and tenderness promised to all her children by a loving God:

> *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*
> (Matthew 23: 37-38)

Because Jerusalem is such an important part of our religious stories it must also be an important part of our search for peace with justice. Pax Christi, in its own small way, will continue to accompany the journey of Jerusalem toward justice, reconciliation, and hope.

(Written in large part by Pax Christi UK as a reflection on the Pax Christi ICON, "Christ is our Reconciliation")

8

JERUSALEM:CITY OF INCARNATION, CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION

Melanie A. Duguid-May

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> "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth. Mount Zion, in the far north... Walk about Zion, go all around it, count its towers, consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever" (Psalms 48: 1-2, 12-14).

In 1975, after my first day in Jerusalem, I walked around the ramparts of the Old City walls at midnight. Spread out below me was the landscape of the stories I had heard while growing up in the Christian church. Here was the stage on which the biblical drama of God's salvation was enacted: Jerusalem. Here was the small military outpost that David incorporated into his growing territory, and then made his capital. Here stood the temple Solomon built on the threshing-floor David bought to erect an altar. In the nearby Sheep Pool, now known

as the Pool of Bethesda in the grounds of St. Anne's near the St. Stephen's Gate, Jesus cured a cripple. Here palm-bearing crowds streamed down the Mount of Olives and hailed Jesus' entry into the city. Jesus led his disciples back across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he pled and prayed "Not my will but Thine be done" under ancient olives trees, some of which are still standing. Through the winding streets of this city Jesus dragged the cross on which he was crucified. Here Peter was caught out by the cock that crowed three times. And here was the tomb from which the stone was rolled away on Easter morning.

Spread out below me was the landscape of the stories, the drama of God's salvation I knew so well. Jerusalem was the Holy City. Jerusalem was the city of the Christian Holy Places, and of holy places for the Jewish people and the Muslim community. From the ramparts I could see how this Holy City — the Psalmist's Mount Zion — sits atop mountain ridges that run up through the Great Rift Valley from eastern Africa, and is surrounded by the ancient valleys of the Gehenna, the Kidron, and the Tyropoean.

When I took that now-impossible-to-take midnight rampart walk, I did not yet understand that neither the landscape nor the Christian Holy Places alone is what makes Jerusalem the Holy City. The holiness of Jerusalem is what I have come to call accrued holiness. Holiness has accrued to Jerusalem because of the ancient Christian communities who worshipped in this city, guarded the sites identified with Jesus' life and ministry, and because of the Christian communities who have

continued to worship and live in the city through the millennia until today. Holiness has accrued to Jerusalem because of the pilgrims who have come through millennia and who come in these days to visit the holy places and to pray in places first made holy by Jesus and his disciples, seeking thereby to be inspired and renewed in faith.

Indeed, each time I have visited Jerusalem since that first visit it has become clearer and clearer to me that the integrity of Christianity as a living faith is intimately tied, not *primarily* to the city or the Holy Places, but to the presence of Christian communities of the faithful who live and worship in the city of Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Holy Land. These Christian communities of the faithful identify themselves as "the offspring of those first disciples and apostles whom Jesus called and who followed him. They are the descendants of those who, on the Day of Pentecost 2000 years ago, experienced the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and responded to the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ."[37]

For me as a Christian, therefore, Jerusalem means incarnation: Jesus came here to the temple as a boy with his parents, commemorated as the Presentation of Christ. Later, he turned over the tables of money changers who were desecrating the temple as a place of worship. Still later, ancient communities of Christians gathered on the hill now called Mount Zion. Pilgrims came to these and other holy places from the 2nd century: Melito of Sardis, Sextus Julius Africanus. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux left us the last recorded description of Jerusalem and Christian holy places before Constantine

transfigured the landscape. Origen commented that Christians wanted to "trace the footprints of Jesus and his disciples, and of the prophets."[38]

Jerusalem means incarnation: local Christians bear witness to the living presence of God's Word become flesh. But Palestinian Christians living in Jerusalem today are under siege, living under Israeli military occupation not unlike the Roman military occupation of Jesus' day. Threats to the Christian presence in Jerusalem are not new. Christians living in Jerusalem have endured the vagaries of conquest and colonial ventures time and time again through the millennia. Still the "Status Quo Legislation of the Holy Places"[39] offered a measure of stability and security to the Christian presence as geopolitical tides ebbed and flowed. Even after the upheaval in the aftermath of the First World War, the Christian presence in the city of Jerusalem grew, given opportunities for education, employment, and housing.

But the catastrophe of 1948 was devastating for the life of Christian in Jerusalem. The numbers of pilgrims also declined. Even Christian communities living nearby in Jaffa and Haifa, the Galilee had to apply for special permits to visit the Holy Places. The disaster of 1967 further weakened the Christian presence and life in the city for Christians. As the military occupation has taken hold of the city, access to the Holy Places has been made difficult, if not impossible for local Christians. Indeed, the "Status Quo" itself is under threat. Recently Pope Francis and Theophilos III, the Greek Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, met and issued a statement: "We see the

Status Quo as a pillar for the protection of rights for the Christian communities in the Holy Land, and all concerned parties must seriously work to uphold it and reverse all recent encroachments."[40]

Jerusalem means incarnation. Jerusalem means crucifixion. For Christians living in East Jerusalem, life under military occupation becomes harsher and harsher, day by day. Together with all Palestinian Jerusalemites, Christians daily reckon the flesh-and-blood reality of house demolitions and settler takeovers of homes, the revocation of Jerusalem Identity Cards for the slightest reason, IDF checkpoints and settler-only ring roads, the expansion of illegal settlements, with ubiquitous construction cranes on the skyline, while there are no basic services in East Jerusalem and the separation wall severs neighborhoods. American Israeli Jeff Halper, who heads the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition, calls this reality a "matrix of control."[41]

Long ago the prophet Jeremiah cried out in grief: "My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent, for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Disaster follows hard on disaster. The whole land is laid waste" (Jeremiah 4:19-20). Echoing Jeremiah's lament, Jalal Abukhater cries: "Of my 22 years of life spent in Jerusalem, I have never felt more fear of losing my beloved city than today. We, Palestinian Jerusalemites, are becoming strangers in our land. Today, I find myself feeling helpless in the face of systematic obliteration of our culture and identity. We are losing our native character and

becoming directionless wanderers with a diminishing sense of where we belong."[42]

Most Christian pilgrims who journey to the city of Jerusalem today do not see this anguishing reality. They come on tours led by a priest or pastor, but packaged by an Israeli tourist company. They stay in Israeli hotels in West Jerusalem, and walk paved paths to 21st century amenities in neighborhoods from which Palestinians were "cleansed" in 1948. They visit the Holy Places on air-conditioned buses that buffer them from random closures of an Old City gate or random checks of identity papers. Their Israeli guides steer them well away from Palestinian shopkeepers, who are regularly harassed by tax authorities and Israeli police, toward the more and more numerous Israeli vendors in the Old City. Christian pilgrims today visit the stones of Holy Places, but they never meet "the living stones," the local Palestinian Christians.

Demographic trends indicate that Christianity as a living faith will be extinct in Jerusalem and in the Holy Land in the not so distant future. A counter-indicator is that more young Palestinian Christians who go to university in Europe or the U.S. are returning to be part of building Palestine for future generations. But the sustainability of this hopeful trend is challenged by difficult living conditions, systemic discrimination, and steadily diminishing employment opportunities for Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Israel.

Still, Palestinian Christians invoke Jesus' words to his followers: "Do not be afraid, little flock" (Luke 12:32) and

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14). Naim Ateek, Anglican priest and founder of Sabeel, continues: "The challenge for us Palestinian Christians today is to be salt and light in our communities. You do not need a large amount of salt or light to give taste and to brighten the area around you."[43]

Jerusalem means incarnation. Jerusalem means crucifixion. Jerusalem also means resurrection. Here the earliest Christians heard the cry, "He is Risen!" Here in these latter days local Palestinian Christians are bearing witness to this good news as they remain steadfast (*samidoon)* in the face of structures of military occupation and systemic oppression. They resist daily attempts to erase Palestinian existence as a people and a culture indigenous to the city and the land. Many, like Jean Zaru, retired Presiding Clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting and founding member of Sabeel, refuse "to withdraw, either to withdraw internally or to withdraw both internally and externally, that is, to leave Palestine, or "to accommodate, comply or manipulate" the oppressive system to their advantage.[44] With Jean Zaru, many choose "the path of active nonviolent resistance,"[45] calling on local and global communities of solidarity in the struggle for human dignity and human rights, and for the preservation of the sacredness of all life on earth.

The spirit of steadfastness or *sumud* suffused the first Intifada, or attempt at "shaking off" Israeli occupation. This intifada, referred to by scholars and commentators as a nonviolent revolution,[46] was an uprising of Palestinians

from all walks of life that also already started to embody the Palestinian state and to build its institutions. This uprising prompted the first of many statements by Jerusalem Heads of Churches, beginning in January 1988. As I tracked down these statements, as I read and reread them — for me, *lectio divina* — I became more and more impressed by the faith and the hope to which they bear witness. For me it is an almost unaccountable hope that partakes of Palestinian *sumud:* steadfastness that refuses to leave the city or the land, and that resists ongoing injustice and oppression. As the Jerusalem Heads of Churches reminded Palestinian Christians, "We have been witnessing to the Lord in the birthplace of Christianity for the last two thousand years. We stand firm in our faith and determination to safeguard against all odds."[47]

Jerusalem means incarnation. Jerusalem means crucifixion. Jerusalem means resurrection: the unaccountable yet unshakeable hope of the Palestinian Christian communities. Steadfastly, day by day, these communities of the faith who have lived and worshipped in and around Jerusalem since the women went to the tomb that first Easter morning embody God's presence in this beleaguered city: Jerusalem, itself the city of hope for a new heaven and a new earth for all God's people in this place and in the whole world God so loves.

9

WHAT JERUSALEM MEANS TO ME: A CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S PERSPECTIVE

Cynthia Finlayson

DR. CYNTHIA FINLAYSON is Associate Professor of Archaeology at Brigham Young University. She has extensive archaeological excavation and cultural heritage site development experience in Syria and Jordan since 1977. She is the current director of the Ad-Deir Monument and Plateau Project in Petra, Jordan, and acting director of the Syro-American expeditions to both Palmyra and Apamea, Syria. At Apamea, she directed the excavation and restoration of the Great Roman Theater of Apamea that vies with the Large Theater at Ephesus for the title of largest extant Roman theater in the world. At Palmyra, she directed excavations close to the Efqa Spring. Dr. Finlayson has also directed a U.S. State Department museum project at the Azem Palace in Damascus.

As a Near Eastern archaeologist and art historian it would be easy to discuss the importance and wonder of Jerusalem's antiquities and cultural heritage sites. They continue to be excavated, researched, and published by modern scholars and to give us insights into the lives of the many peoples and societies that have inhabited the regions of the ancient city since the Neolithic Era — historic time periods before, during, and after the establishment of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three great monotheistic faiths. However, as both a Christian and a person who has worked in the Near East for over thirty years, Jerusalem has come to mean so much more to me than just a scholarly research subject due to the Holy City's spiritual and thus emotional significance to all Jews, Christians, and Muslims whose very souls and religious

identities are interwoven with the existence and history of Jerusalem itself.

To me, the meaning of the name of the city, "The Place of Peace," or, "The Abode of Peace," reminds us all of our responsibilities as Jews, Christians, and Muslims to reclaim for this Holy City its original role as a sanctified sacred space, devoid of religious and/or political conflicts, where all those who worship Elohim/God/Allah (hereafter referred to as God) are welcome and to which all those searching for God may come. The role of the city as a sacred space was consecrated by the Prophet Abraham who was commanded to go to the land called 'Moriah' to demonstrate his love of God above all earthly attachments (Genesis 22: 1-2; 2 Samuel 24:18; 2 Chronicles 3:1). It was due to Abraham's willingness to demonstrate his obedience to God (via God's test of Abraham to sacrifice his cherished son) that this great prophet and servant of God became the father of the Covenant between the One Deity and all of Abraham's physical and spiritual descendants. Abraham is thus the spiritual father of all monotheists, whether Jew, Christian, or Muslim, with Jerusalem/Mt. Moriah established by God as the shared sacred home for those who follow Abraham's example in being willing to place the love of God above all earthly possessions, passions, political agendas, or polities. It is important for me to remember that the spiritual role of Mt. Moriah was established when it consisted of only a high, relatively flat rock outcropping, and that it existed as a 'holy sacred space' where man communed with God before the building of Jerusalem's temples, churches, or mosques.

These earthly buildings are thus superfluous with relation to the spiritual importance of the site, i.e., they did not exist and were not necessary for God's Presence or the establishment of His Covenant with those who worship Him. So, we must ask ourselves as monotheists, is it God we venerate within the Holy City, or is it the blocks of stone organized by mere humans that are subject to earthly decay and destruction that we place on a higher throne of esteem and value than God Himself?

Significantly, before visiting Jerusalem for the first time, I had envisioned the geography of the city in a completely different way with Mt. Moriah towering over all. I was surprised to discover that the traditional site of Mt. Moriah was actually a tall bedrock rise (much like the acropolis in Athens) in the center of a ring of higher mountainous escarpments. The region of Jerusalem is thus shaped like a *patera*, an ancient offering dish used in both pagan and non-pagan rituals to pour libations of honey, milk, or wine to deity with the bowl having a high center surrounded by a round deep trough, and with its sides higher on the edges, much like a modern round Jello mold. Thus, at Jerusalem, from whichever direction one looks down from its higher surrounding hillsides, one can see what would become, over time, the spiritual center of the Old City, the Temple Mount, and, under Islam, the Haram esh-Sharif including the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. It was upon this sacred bedrock site, later a Canaanite/Jebusite threshing floor, that King Solomon built the first Hebrew Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). It is significant that the site was being used as a threshing floor by the ancient Canaanites before

King David's conquest of the city. In antiquity, threshing floors often served dual purposes as ritual sites of veneration and for the pagan celebrations of fertility and rejuvenation — the planting of seeds, their harvest, and their processing symbolic of the cycle of death, life, and rejuvenation. Thus, even the pagan Canaanites may have used the site for winnowing their crops, but also venerating their deities. It was to this city that Jesus of Nazareth journeyed as both a child and adult to celebrate the Passover and teach in its streets, synagogues, and in the remodeled Hebrew Temple — an edifice that was undergoing major structural improvements under Herod the Great and his successors. Herod himself was not ethnically Jewish, but was part Idumaean/Edomite on his father's side with a Nabataean mother who had links to Petra. The street stones of Roman-era Jerusalem absorbed the blood of Christ's Passion, and its walls were the last vistas that Christ could see when raised by his Roman tormentors to die upon the cross. It was from one of Jerusalem's cut bedrock tombs that He arose from the dead. Almost eight centuries later (after the Temple of Herod had been destroyed and the Jewish populations of the region decimated and dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond by two revolts against Rome in 70 and 132 AD), the city had become a Christian pilgrimage site, but one whose many traditional holy places and relics reflected the divisions that had emerged among Christian groups concerning diverse doctrines over the nature of the Godhead. A new renewal of the Abrahamic faith in the One God emerged from Abraham's descendants in Arabia. Significantly, it was to Jerusalem and

Mt. Moriah that the Prophet Muhammad was carried by God in a night vision of the degrees of heaven that awaited the Muslim faithful. Therefore, at the advent of Islam, Muslims initially prayed facing Jerusalem before the direction of prayer was changed to Mecca and the Holy Ka'aba, another ancient pilgrimage site also associated by Islam with the Prophets Adam and Abraham as an earlier place of worship to the One God and a sacred edifice that was cleansed of its pagan idols by the Prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib.

By the time of the conquest of Byzantine Jerusalem by Muslim forces under Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah and its surrender to Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab in April of 637 AD, the site of the previous Hebrew Temple had become a sheep and goat pasture littered with the stones of the Temple's previous destruction as well as animal dung. Christians in Jerusalem would not build on the ancient site due to Christ's prophecy of the Hebrew Temple's destruction, and instead, focused on the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as well as other traditional Christian sites in the city, as well as in Bethlehem and Nazareth. By this time, the Jewish population was so dispersed throughout the ancient Roman world that no Jewish Temple could be rebuilt upon this holy site. Indeed, following the Jewish Revolts against Rome, Jews had been banned from living within sight of Jerusalem by provincial Roman law. It was Islam that now restored the sacredness of Mt. Moriah and re-invigorated the Abrahamic Covenant via the geometric symbolism and stunning beauty of the Dome

of the Rock and the prayer halls of the al-Aqsa Mosque. Significantly, they utilized Christian Byzantine craftsmen to do so as well as recovering the remaining Hebrew-cut stones of the previous Jewish temples. Now, a new dome of religious piety shared the skies over Jerusalem with the towers of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, but the building of the Dome of the Rock also incorporated shared Byzantine Christian craftsmanship and ancient Hebrew and Phoenician finished stone ashlars within its very walls and decoration.

Ongoing pilgrimages by Jews, Christians, and Muslims to Jerusalem over the subsequent ages were not deterred by devastating wars, sieges, plagues, and famines, so strong was the spiritual magnetism of this Holy City to all three faiths. Significantly, this spiritual magnetism continues to increase and grow today. Thus, the reality of this ongoing phenomenon must be acknowledged, i.e., that the original role of the city as envisioned by God was seemingly that of a 'sacred space' for all the children of Abraham who wished to visit or reside within its walls. Thus, for me, the very meaning of the name of Jerusalem, begs us all to remember that Abraham was not yet a resident Jew, nor a Christian, nor a Muslim, but at the same time, he was the genesis of all three — the father of all three faiths and, more importantly, the servant and 'Friend of God,' and the epitome of hospitality, generosity, faith, and obedience. Jerusalem also reminds me of how far we often fall short of Abraham's example, especially with relation to the potential of what Jerusalem's very name calls to us strive

to fulfill within her streets, i.e., 'Peace,' and, an 'Abode of Peace.'

When I walk down the narrow streets and alleyways of the Old City, I am awash in the scents of the spice vendors, the leather craftsmen, the intoxicating bread odor of the small bakeries, as well as the calls of the street merchants, the diverse languages of pilgrims, and the conversations of the local residents in Arabic and Hebrew, Yiddish, Greek, Latin, Italian, Russian, Armenian, French, and English. Despite this babel of languages and cultural divisions, the city of Jerusalem symbolizes for me a home with many rooms for us all as a spiritually related family of brothers and sisters — as the spiritual descendants of Abraham. From a friend's house in Wadi es-Sir in Jordan, I can see the lights of Jerusalem at night. Its bright lights beckon me back as the city beckons all of us back to our spiritual origins.

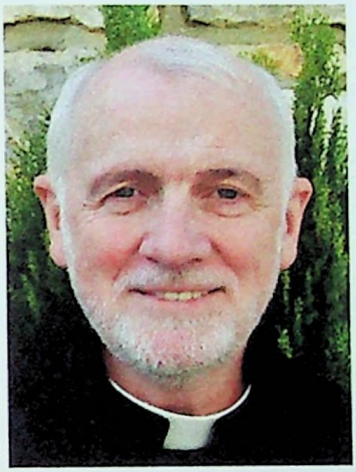
But, Jerusalem also challenges us. Will we make it a city of Light to be shared by all, or will it succumb to the Darkness of the Evil One who promotes selfishness, revenge, and thrives on political dissensions and chaos? This is our test today, just as Abraham was tested. Will we sacrifice the things that we worship within the Dark World on the altar to God, or will we cling to them rather than fulfill our spiritual potential as part of the covenant family of Abraham? Are we up to this test as Jews, Christians, and Muslims? The Holy City longs to fulfill its name, "The City and Abode of Peace." How long will we make it wait, and what can I do on a daily basis to strive to be kind, hospitable, obedient to God, and lift my brothers

and sisters who live within Jerusalem's walls and in the Holy Land, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, to a shared spiritual home of peace. How can I help in some small way to make Jerusalem a city of shining Light, an offering to God, a home where I can love and respect my Jewish, Christian, and Muslim brothers and sisters? This is the challenge, and this is what Jerusalem means to me.

10

JERUSALEM: A SIGN TO THE NATIONS?

Michael McDonagh



FATHER MICHAEL MCDONAGH was born in 1950 and is a native of Sligo, Ireland. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1974 at All Hallows Seminary, Dublin for the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida. He completed his graduate studies in Canon Law at the Catholic University of America in 1978, and worked as a Judge in the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal. From 1983 to 1987, Father McDonagh served as Pastor of St. Michael's Parish, Clearwater, Florida. Then he worked at EWTN, presenting a weekly Bible program and co-hosted Mother Angelica Live for five years. Hearing the call of the Lord to live and work in Jerusalem, he moved there in 1999, and is presently incardinated into the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Having lived in Jerusalem since the turn of the 21st century, I've come to see the city as 'A Tale of Two Cities,' not like Dickens' London and Paris, but of a city divided East and West. The reality here is that of two cities, a reality that must be faced resolutely because the danger lies not in recognizing it but in turning a blind eye to it. The sooner leaders and people adapt to the reality and the urgent need for a creative solution to a divided Jerusalem, the better all residents will fare. This perspective, worthy of commentary, is not one I wish to dwell on. There is another "tale," another perspective to relate. That is, the divine call of God to Jerusalem (and Israel), and the response (or lack of!). Call and election are inseparable.

Today, Jerusalem is a conflicted city, nevertheless the divine call remains. Human indifference to the divine call to

be a light to the nations does not change its status. The city is predominantly like any other secular city. God has shared His mind on Jerusalem:

> *"Jerusalem, built as a city that is strongly compact..."* (Psalms 122:3-5)
>
> *"At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord..."* (Jeremiah 3:17)
>
> *"You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord..."* (Isaiah 62:3)
>
> *"Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city..."* (Zechariah 8:3)

A perspective, shaped by extreme events and speech that garner headlines and thereby creating a view common outside Israel, is the opposite of God's. Nevertheless, His is the lasting view, "*the whole earth is full of his glory*" (Isaiah 6). Where, one might ask, given the abundant un-glory? In the spiritual realm, glory and un-glory do co-exist. The good news, though not clearly evident, is that God is in absolute control though humans may be out of control. What is evident are extreme views advocating, on the one hand, unconditional support of any decision made by the ruling government that advances the greatest possible claims for land and security — "I support Palestinian self-rule, I support a Two-State solution, as long as it's not on Israeli land" wrote one leader. On the other hand, one hears, "Israel has no right to exist." Neither extreme coincides with the divine call.

The importance of Jerusalem cannot be overstated: as Jerusalem goes, so goes Israel! God chose a city, Jerusalem, and a people, Israel, and He has not changed His mind. Chosen, alone, is not the full story, but, the purpose for which one is chosen. The people of God (including the Church) were chosen to be a model, an example for all nations on how to live in obedience to God and in justice to one another. As such, Israel was chosen to be the preachers, in word and action. It was there that Divine Wisdom chose to "pitch His tent." And thus, the "chosen" are to "boast," not of technology, medical advancement, military power, rather, the name of the Lord. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" (Psalms 20:7). Being chosen by God carries a heavy responsibility. Specifically, this requires accountability in a unique measure.

If biblical principles are employed to define and defend Israel, then biblical principles must be used to evaluate Israel's performance of its purpose. Biblical Israel is a community intimately bound up with a calling to reveal God's wisdom and justice. Historically, some successive biblical governments, as a pattern for human society, fulfilled the calling in varying degrees. Land, given by God, is given for a specific purpose. The Lord demonstrated this whenever the purpose for which He gave it was not fulfilled; He exiled Israel on a few occasions.

The prophet Habakkuk's encounter with the Lord, recounted in chapter one of his three-chapter book, provides a clear example. The prophet lamented, *"How long, O LORD, must I cry for help and you do not listen? Or cry out to you,*

"Violence!" and you do not intervene? Why do you let me see iniquity? Why do you simply gaze at evil? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife and discord. This is why the law is numbed, and justice never comes, for the wicked surround the just; this is why justice comes forth perverted." The Lord answered him, *"Look over the nations and see! Be utterly amazed! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe, were it told."* God describes what He is going to do and the prophet basically tells Him, "You can't do that!" I mention this brief section of the chapter (reading all three chapters is recommended!) because I see this as relevant to our day. God is doing something that, possibly, many *"... would not believe, were it told."* While God does not author evil, He does use it to deal with His people and His world. Maybe some would not agree on the latter point, which disagreement may be due to a grand-fatherly image of God. Grandfathers tend to be more lenient on the grandchildren than they were on their own children. The Christian Church (also Jerusalem) must learn that God deals with it, just like He did with biblical Israel. He not only "lays" hands on the head, but He can apply a "hand" to the seat of learning! I recall the words of an American preacher, "God fixes a fix to fix you; if you unfix the fix before you're fixed, He'll fix another fix to fix you." Specifically, here in Israel, there are many "fixes," if we'd only chose to see them in the sense of Bob Mumford's humorous message. To "know the wisdom and power of God," one must recognize that God deals with us, and that we must have dealings with Him. Failure to ask Him, "what, Lord, are

you teaching us through this obstacle, policy...?" may result in another "year" in the desert, "*forty years I was wearied of this people; their hearts are astray, they do not know my ways; so, I swore in my anger, never shall they enter into my rest*" (Psalm 95).

When a person, an institution, or a nation loses its vision something serious happens. When the "chosen people" lost its missionary character, it became powerful but oppressive. In practice, this, of course, has made nonsense out of God's call to them. The land that God gave Israel was, as it were, a sacramental mark of His calling. Recall the catechism definition of sacrament — according to St. Augustine — *a sacrament* is "an *outward* and visible *sign* of an inward and *invisible grace*." One can only lament that a people whom the Lord blessed so richly has settled for so much less than God wishes to bestow. The modern state of Israel (the political reality) is not to be confused with biblical Israel, which, sadly, many Christians seem to have done. There is, however, a bright side: the modern state is a context in which the chosen people of old can demonstrate God's wisdom and justice. Israel must have a home to show God's hospitality, His Wisdom, His character. All is not lost.

While most local interested people are looking for solutions to the seemingly unending, tormenting problems, there must be a clear focus on addressing how conditions under which Israel can exercise their calling is established and held together. Jerusalem (and by extension Israel) is, according to the Word of God, a city (a people, a nation) "strongly compact." At the

same time, the rights and freedoms of its neighbors must be ensured. Without this, the entire land becomes an open-air prison, which is not a gift from God.

There is, however, no good news when some Palestinians proclaim and pursue the humiliation of Israel. And there is no good news for Israelis in a security that embeds in concrete the anger and resentment of Palestinians.

A word of Sacred Scripture — *"For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives"* (Hebrews 12:6) — arouses some controversy and objection. However, the Word must be received without rationalizing the difficult truth. As stated earlier, God does not author evil, but he does use it. His Word shows that He deals with His people through the intervention of other nations and various events. Failure to read the signs of the time can result in devastation. At the same time, individuals should be aware of assuming a divine right to chasten on God's behalf, as we see with killings done in the name of God.

There is a profound need for non-Jewish people to mirror back to modern Israel its own true vocation. In the Old Testament, we see Ruth, Job, and the Ninevites doing this. The Christian Church has a vital role to play. It can offer back to an Israel-under-God its own gift of the ideal of wisdom and justice. Israel has settled for less than this ideal. In some ways, the Church, too, settles for a great deal less than God offers.

To question the political reality in the name of biblical Israel is not an assault on the State's right to exist. But God's plan for it is that it be home to a different kind of reality. There

is a divine logic that confounds human reasoning, *"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute you..."* The soul of Israel and Palestine are shattered by violence and indiscriminate killing. The New Testament speaks of Barnabas, "son of encouragement." There is need, on all sides, for many "sons of encouragement" to rise up, men and women who will encourage lawfulness and stability in each other.

I have come to recognize, over the years, that the modern state of Israel is the condition for the Jewish people to exercise their historical calling to be a paradigm for the nations, to be "*salt of the earth, and light of the world.*" Israel must be encouraged to become so. It must not simply be allowed to become another nation deeply trapped in the same violence and self-interest, characteristic of other nations. Very few, within and without, have encouraged Israel to be this different kind of nation. It has to do with being held to accountability. Maybe, it's a problem that "human kind cannot bear very much reality," in the words of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Not just the factual reality (facts on the ground) but the divine reality that says, "*Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect....*" Accountability to God, to His Word, and to others is essential. The right of the Jew has been to hold the Christian accountable relative to Christians' historical ill-treatment of Jews. Likewise, Christians have the right to call Israel to accountability. The Christian Church so often betrayed God's Wisdom and Justice.

There is no need for any triumphalist attitudes, on the part of anyone. This would prove inimical to the need. Our primary

focus must be the already revealed purpose(s) of God for Israel: the special call. God is free to choose whomsoever He wills. The fact that Israel/Jerusalem has a special call and is a special place and is failing in its response to that call is a cause of distress felt by many who understand the nature of the call. It would appear that the state of Israel has refused to enter the unique and rich biblical mindset given by the inspired Word and to think beyond policies of containment and control to Godly justice for all. Yes, it is a fearful thing to be surrounded by terror, but God is a refuge and very present help in time of need. Total reliance on God is the model Israel is called to reveal to the nations.

The welfare of Israel lies in its obedience to God's Word and trust in His provision.

The perspective offered here is designed to prompt a reflection on how Jerusalem (and the State) can nurture and honor its historical/biblical purpose to reveal God's wisdom and justice to the nations. If only this city could be the sign to the nations! It seems impossible. With God, all things are possible.

11

My JERUSALEM:
A CALL FOR A HUMAN WORLD

Hind Khoury

AMBASSADOR HIND KHOURY is the Secretary General of Kairos Palestine. An economist, she worked in development of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) with USAID, UNDP, UNFPA, the Bethlehem 2000 Project, the Multi-sector Review of East Jerusalem Project, NORAD, and UNESCO. She was Minister of Jerusalem Affairs for the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian ambassador to France from 2006 to 2010. Ambassador Khoury also served as board member of Sabeel-Jerusalem and is currently on the board of Bethlehem Bible College. Other present-day roles are president of the Arab Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ) and president of the Bethlehem Rotary Club.

I. Introduction

I ache to the core for my Jerusalem, my Palestine, my Syria, my Iraq, and my Yemen.

I ache from so much injustice and wars, from so much inhumanity and oppression, in our region but also in the world.

The only serious question I pose to myself and to the world is how to regain that wonderful sense of humanity that I grew up with as a Palestinian Christian in Bethlehem, the town of joy and hope, and Jerusalem, the symbol of love, self-sacrifice, and redemption.

I grew up in the shadow of *Al-Nakba* ((literally "catastrophe"; the 1948 Palestinian exodus and dispossession) to refugee parents. Like most Palestinian refugees, Christian

and Muslim, dignity and faith sustained us to restart life when all was lost and left behind in what became Israel.

I lived throughout the 50 years of occupation that started with the 1967 War. Living one's faith in this Holy Land has been an integral part of our lives, which revolved mainly around pilgrimage up to Jerusalem, a tradition practiced over millennia by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The highlight of any Christian family excursion, often weekly, was a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem. With every visit we relived the crucifixion in all its pains, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ with all the hope it brought. All this climaxed in Holy Week and Easter celebrations that represent God's ultimate love to every one of us regardless of faith or race.

Throughout my life, Jerusalem posed a major challenge as to its meaning and its message. Our Jerusalem has always embraced a plural and diverse society, par excellence, a colorful variety of Christian denominations belonging to the Latin, Orthodox, Monophysite, and Protestant communions. The same applies to various Muslim congregations and schools, including Sunnis, Sufis, Ismailis, and more. Truly, after 1948, the Old City, placed under Jordanian rule, was void of Jews due to the 1948 War and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and country in what became the State of Israel. But we still had living amongst us Jews married to Palestinian Christians or Muslims and the memory of a whole generation that grew up in the Old City alongside Jews and Muslims in total harmony.

It is this harmony in diversity that I miss most of all in our Jerusalem today. Why does Israel insist on ousting us and ethnic cleansing us in order to establish an exclusively Jewish united capital in this Holy City? How come this is acceptably justified by selective readings of our Holy Book, the Bible? Why is the world so complicit in this illegality and sin as well as in denying the city's world heritage? How come the Church is generally in agreement with the Zionist project against the wonderful teachings of Jesus Christ? How come there is little concern that Jerusalem's universal message of love, sacrifice, and redemption that made us all the children of God and so fully human is reduced to a real estate scheme of a modern nation-state?

Three thousand years of revelations have passed in this same city and yet the message that sought to humanize the world has not totally been understood. Greed and hegemony remain more powerful instincts.

II. Living with Prolonged Injustice

East Jerusalem, which was annexed to Israel in 1967 and is continuously expanded since then to take over more Palestinian land in the West Bank, suffers deep discrimination from the ruling authorities. A capital city that provided 30% of the West Bank economy is no longer. Jerusalem Palestinians, considered only as residents in their own city, suffer from 80% poverty. They refuse to participate in the city's municipal elections to

avoid recognizing the illegal occupation and to protest the denial of their political rights and right to self-determination. East Jerusalem has been gradually and completely isolated from its natural and organic extension into the West Bank since its annexation by Israel. This was further concretized by a Separation or Apartheid Wall, twice the height of the Berlin Wall, long and sinuous to take as much empty land as possible and get rid of as many Palestinians as possible. This wall divides families and tears the socioeconomic and cultural fabric of the occupied territories. It separates people from their place of work, nurseries, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and cultural life.

East Jerusalem faces dramatic discrimination and expulsion policies. It is denied sufficient suitable services regarding housing, education, employment, police security, infrastructure, economic viability, investment, and growth. Many Palestinian neighborhoods are confined to built areas and reflect realities resembling the Middle Ages — run down, lots of garbage, no pavements, heavily dense, and overcrowded.

As a general trend, while the city's economy lies in ruins, most Jerusalemites find work in Ramallah, other parts of the West Bank, or immigrate to find suitable employment abroad. Many, especially lower-strata employees, work in Israel. Those crossing to the West Bank have to cross the Apartheid Wall and military checkpoints on a daily basis in Kafkaesque realities, as is the case of the Qalandia military checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem.

The issue is demography, not democracy

The core objective of Israeli occupation policies in Jerusalem is to limit or better get rid of Palestinians whose number, according to Israel, stands at the 'alarming rate' of almost 40% of the total population. I actually believe that half of the Palestinian population of the city is already excluded, either living abroad or in the West Bank, or stuck outside the Apartheid Wall in what are Jerusalem neighborhoods left lawless and outside the Wall. Geo-political means have been utilized to limit the demography by squeezing villages into crowded residential neighborhoods and limiting direct access between them.

The illegal Israeli settlement expansion in East Jerusalem has so far absorbed 300,000 colonial Jewish settlers, more than the Palestinian population of the city. Bypass roads and highways were constructed to confine and choke Palestinian neighborhoods. Average density in Palestinian neighborhoods is about 18,000 per km^2 (1 km^2 is equivalent to 0.386 sq^2) while some Israeli settlements have a population density of 2,690, according to Arab Research Institute in Jerusalem. The total percentage of land left to Palestinians in East Jerusalem, including built areas, amounts to barely 13% of the land area of East Jerusalem.

Military checkpoints around East Jerusalem were established to separate it from its organic extension into the West Bank. The West Bank Palestinians are denied entry except with special permits that are difficult to obtain. Palestinian couples,

with one partner from the West Bank or Gaza, are not allowed family unification by a law enacted over 10 years ago. Often these mixed families do stay in East Jerusalem to stick to jobs but live illegally in the city. Their children cannot get officially registered, leaving about 10,000 of them with no legal status whatsoever.

Legislation to support discrimination

All the above measures and more are legalized through Municipal and state legislation and regulations aiming to hamper development, provision of services, creating employment, or providing building permits.

The insecurity in one's home

Insufficiency of legal housing led to illegal construction on private property. Housing demolition of Palestinian homes is almost a daily occurrence. Almost 20,000 homes in East Jerusalem are slated for such demolition and some may have already received such orders.

Due to a lack of housing and the unaffordable high prices of property, people opt to live outside the city. (We live according to the Palestinian standard of living at about $2,400 as GNP per capita — but are subjected to prices within the Israeli economy with GNP per capita above $34,000). Actually, most young people have no choice but to move to the crowded and

lawless neighborhoods I mentioned above, or to the West Bank, but hence risk losing their residency rights in the city.

House raids and detentions

The Israel security forces invade people's homes on a regular basis, most often in the middle of the night, to detain youth and children for assumed accusations, including throwing stones or resisting occupation measures of some sort or another. They go through inhuman incarceration and investigation methods. Punishment, if found guilty, might include the demolition of their families' homes. In a recent Knesset hearing on the matter it was noted that the police was acting beyond the limits of the law.

People in general but certainly the youth, and for generations now, live in constant fear of being detained and imprisoned. It is said that one third of the Palestinian male population has passed through Israeli prisons; many are incarcerated without legal charges based on the law of administrative detention, which allows police to imprison persons for six months, often renewed indefinitely.

A destroyed local economy

The economy of East Jerusalem has been destroyed slowly but surely. In earlier times, as the capital of the areas occupied in 1967, East Jerusalem provided 30% of Palestinian GNP and bragged developed trade, tourism services, and tertiary health

care facilities. It was the center of a service economy with foreign and local civil society organizations and diplomatic representation. Churches and church organizations and Muslim religious institutions were also abundant and engaged.

Over the years, all East Jerusalem economic sectors suffered regular and dramatic regressions and risked eventual collapse. What is left of this independent economy time will be taken care of with the substantial help of more discriminate legislation and taxation.

The right to worship, the right for a narrative

Christian and Muslim holy places face arson by extreme settlers. Freedom of worship is often hampered with no consequences. The Dome of the Rock is frequently invaded by extremist settlers, igniting angry reactions and increasing religious fervor and transforming the conflict into a religious one.

Palestinian Christians outside the city have no access to the holy sites except during Christmas. On Holy Week, a time of important celebrations leading up to Easter Sunday, the Old City is closed in our face since 2005.

The message is clear: Israel succeeded in obliterating the practice of millennial Christian traditions in East Jerusalem. For the last 10 years, less and less local Christians reach the Old City for the Easter celebrations risking the gradual but eventual disappearance of these traditions.

Jewish settler intransigence and illegal actions against the local population continue with impunity as well. In summer 2014, a young boy of 15 from the Palestinian neighborhood of East Jerusalem was kidnapped by settlers and forced to drink kerosene and burnt alive in a Jerusalem forest, again with meager consequence to the crimes. Palestinians are still demanding that the homes of these Jewish terrorists be also demolished similar to punishments regularly imposed on Palestinian families.

In fact these descriptions are but a poor rendering of the reality of the occupation in East Jerusalem. Many crimes and grievances do not make it to the news. They may be denounced or regretted by foreign governments, but not much beyond that. This reality has been monitored and reported on by the European Union, the United Nations, and other major international organizations, yet these measures continue unabated and in total impunity.

In my city, life is made nonviable already for us. We know that the future of our children is already hijacked, let alone that of our grandchildren and beyond.

Watching and monitoring these measures against people's lives and livelihoods over the years, I strongly believe that Jesus is still crying over Jerusalem. His message to humanity remains unheeded: caring, compassion, goodness, humility, self-sacrifice, and sharing. Millennia of revelations in this city are ignored. These conditions of occupation and oppression dehumanize both the oppressed and oppressor and none will be able to obtain real liberation. As the situation festers it will

bring along more violence and extremism with detrimental results, not only locally but regionally and globally as well.

III. How Has the Israeli Occupation Been Sustained for Over 50 Years

There are a myriad of reasons for the perpetuation of the Israeli occupation. In his address to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs Conference on December 29, 2016 and at the Kairos Palestine 7th Anniversary Conference on December 9, 2016, the Israeli journalist Gideon Levy offered a few explanations. Focusing specifically on the discourse Israel uses to legitimize its actions, he suggested that this discourse revolves around key 'truths' such as Jews being the chosen people, the history of European anti-Semitism that culminated in the Holocaust, dehumanizing Palestinians by denying them the right to resist and defend themselves, and ensuring they are identified with world terrorism.

In his book, *Faith in the Face of Empire*, Dr. Mitri Raheb, the Palestinian theologian, argues that the way the Christian West chose to read the history of the region, mainly through the Bible, ignored the history of the people of the land. Up to the present time and after more than a century of archaeology that exposes a more realistic history of the region, biblical history and strangely enough, Church history, seek to blur the Palestinian identity that is deeply rooted in the whole history of the land.

In Palestine, as empires come and go, the people of the land continued about their normal life, especially in the Palestinian countryside. When deportation and exile were enforced, they applied to a small percentage of the people while most remained.

Without an understanding of how religion was used to shape the history of Jerusalem and of Palestine through the ages, and without thoroughly understanding and challenging biblical theology, the story of Palestinians and their identity will continue to be manipulated, if not eventually hijacked.

IV. Conclusion: The Place of Jerusalem

This is where Jerusalem, as an ideal and a symbol of peace, of tolerance and of diversity, can lead the way. Jerusalem is not an ordinary city. It is the cradle of revelation and the center of the Abrahamic faiths. Jerusalem must be understood and promoted as both a universal celestial message and a terrestrial truth with a mission to humanize us with compassion, justice, mercy, responsibility, truthfulness, vision, and yes, love. Only then we can correct so many deformities in our world today. Only then we can fight the violence within us and around us, and empower our action for what is GOOD.

The future of Jerusalem lies in a return to the values of the Abrahamic faiths rather than exclusive rights by any one faith. It lies in the capacity of our own humanity to defend its own achievements, namely international governance, as the means

to resolve conflicts. It lies in successfully separating issues of state from issues of religion, especially and most importantly, in Jerusalem.

Religion cannot be used to justify political decisions. As declared in the Kairos Palestine document, "any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.

The Palestinian Christian call is for peace and reconciliation in the land. In the case of a final political agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, the city of Jerusalem can be divided into two sovereign and administrative geographies, without walls, in an open city to all peoples and to all worshippers.

Many models have been put forth to establish the peace of Jerusalem. But, we cannot divide the message and holiness of Jerusalem to reflect our narrow view of the world. We cannot reduce God and his revelations to our size. Hope comes with human beings working hard to elevate themselves to the ideals of the heavens.

12

JERUSALEM IS FOR ALL

Rateb Y. Rabie

SIR RATEB Y. RABIE, KCHS is the Founder and President/ CEO of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF). Born in Amman, Jordan to Palestinian parents, he is co-founder and past national president of the Birzeit Society and co-founder, Vice President, and Treasurer of the Institute for Health, Development, and Research in Palestine. He is also a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of Holy Sepulchre and a 4th Degree Knight of Columbus, founder and co-chair of the Holy Land Outreach Committee of the Knights of Columbus, Maryland State Council. He is recipient of the Faith and Tolerance Award from the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee. Sir Rateb is committed to improving the living conditions for Palestinians Christians in their homeland, preserving Palestine's Christian heritage, and strengthening the identity of Palestinian Christians in the worldwide diaspora.

All Christians trace their roots to the first Pentecost (Acts 2:11). The Church was born when the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, descended upon a group of Jesus' disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago. Today, the Christian families living there are neither immigrants nor converts from Judaism or Islam. They are the descendants of those who first believed in Jesus Christ. Lest we forget, Jesus, born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth and other parts of the Holy Land, is the only prophet who spent months, if not years, in Jerusalem and its environs. It is there where he was judged, crucified, and resurrected.

These Christians live in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Zababde, Ibillin, Shefa-'Amr, Taybeh, Jifna, Ramallah/El Bireh, Birzeit, Madaba, Karak, and other towns and cities in Palestine, Jordan, and Israel. Together, they comprise the Mother Church. While cognizant of the Holy City's importance for Muslims and Jews, they view it as an integral part of their faith.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the political capital of the State of Israel betrays centuries-old international commitments to a shared city. His decision does not only threaten Palestinian access to the city, but also disrupt the very character of Jerusalem itself. Through his words and actions, he is adding himself to the long list of politicians and others who seek to lay claim to Jerusalem for their personal gain and private interests, disregarding the history, the laws, and the complexity of the facts on the ground.

How can it be that after 2000 years of faithful and shared custody over their Holy City, Palestinians — Christian and Muslim — should lose their right to their spiritual and geographical home overnight? It is incomprehensible to consider Jerusalem under the sole jurisdiction of any one faith or political entity.

To dedicate Jerusalem to Israel under the false pretenses of upholding a U.S.-led peace process undermines our better judgment. As Palestinian American academic, political activist, and literary critic Edward W. Said, who was born in Jerusalem, argued in an essay on Jerusalem several years ago, a strong campaign that recognizes Jerusalem as a complex and

multivalence city is precisely the kind of antidote we need to the "drifting, impossibly unwise course now being undertaken... beneath the tattered banners of the peace process. I do not see that overly praised and defended process as leading to the kind of peace most people can live with for any length of time ...."[48]

The Holy City is special, and its character resides in its inclusivity and universality. It should be shared by two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli, and the three monotheistic faiths of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. As Pope Francis has cautioned, "Jerusalem is a unique city sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, where the Holy Places for the respective religions are venerated, and [where there is] a special vocation to peace... such identity must be preserved and strengthened for the benefit of the Holy Land, the Middle East, and the entire world ...."[49]

On July 17, 2000, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, the Latin Patriarch, and the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem sent a letter to U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat who were meeting in Camp David to negotiate several issues, including Jerusalem. In it, they offered prayers so that the three political leaders will succeed "in [their] prophetic mission of ending the long and painful conflict in our region." Equally important, their letter provided a concise explanation of the Christian reality in the Holy Land (Appendix III).

> [I]t is an established fact that our Patriarchates and Churches enjoy a long history and a rich heritage in this biblical land. Local

> Christians have been represented by their ecclesial institutions here for centuries, and have enjoyed special privileges that were codified by the Status Quo provisions as much as by custom and tradition over many centuries. As you deliberate over those issues that impact the Holy City of Jerusalem, we trust you will not forget or overlook our age-long presence here. The rich tapestry of this land is made even richer and more precious with this continuous Christian life, witness, and presence alongside the two other Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Islam.

On December 6, 2017, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem sent a letter to President Trump urging him to consider their viewpoint and "continue recognizing the present international status of Jerusalem." They asked him to help them "all walk towards more love and a definitive peace, which cannot be reached without Jerusalem being for all" (Appendix V). A December 10 Vatican Press Office communiqué reiterated the Holy See's position on "the singular character of the Holy City and the essential need for respecting the status quo," as well as the conviction that "only a negotiated solution between Israelis and Palestinians can bring a stable and lasting peace ...."[50]

If there is to be peace in Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine), then the fate of Jerusalem has to be decided through negotiations that recognize both secular and religious positions on and interests in the city. Jerusalem is a central part of the present and future of both Palestinian and Israeli societies, and of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Lasting peace can only be achieved by securing the political aspirations of both peoples and the religious rights of the three faiths. There can be no monopoly of sovereignty by either Israelis or Palestinians. Jerusalem should remain shared.

As Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah stated, "True political leaders and church leaders, local and universal, should consider Jerusalem, first, as a universal city, and then look at the local exigencies of its two peoples" (Essay 1).

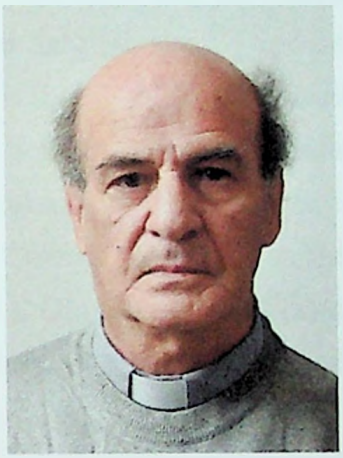
The fate of Jerusalem cannot and should not be decided by any single political leader or foreign government. Christians and all peace-loving people around the world should raise their voices against any move that would hand over Jerusalem, whether symbolically or effectively, to any one single faith or political entity.

This is a historic moment on which the future hinges. Jerusalem is in danger. We must stand against would-be conquerors of our Holy City and say: "Keep your hands off of Jerusalem." We must stand in solidarity with its Palestinian and other inhabitants and say: "We share your anguish and we will never abandon you."

13

JERUSALEM HAS TAUGHT ME

Rafiq Khoury



FATHER RAFIQ KHOURY was born in the Palestinian Christian village of Taybeh. A renowned Palestinian theologian and preacher, he specializes in Pastoral Theology and Catechism with the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem. He holds a Ph.D. from the Lateran University in Rome, serves as a board member of the Al-Liqa' Center for Religious and Heritage Studies in the Holy Land, and was the Secretary General of the Synod of the Catholic Churches of the Holy Land. Most of his writings are in Arabic, but among the titles of his works in English are "The History of Jerusalem: A Christian Perspective," "The Palestinian People as a Theological Issue," "Jesus Christ in Christian Faith," "Identity: Meaning, Components, and Dimensions," "The Theological Implications of the Current Situation in the Holy Land: From the Point of View of a Christian Palestinian," "The Conflict of Narratives: From Memory to Prophecy," and "Living with the Cross."

> Jerusalem has taught me that I can be a human being only with other human beings, that I can only be a Christian with other Christians, that I am a believer only with other believers.
>
> Jerusalem has taught me to reconcile myself with my own memory without denying the memory of the other, to be attached to my Holy Places without excluding the Holy Places of the others. Jerusalem has taught me even to consider the Holy Places of the others as my own Holy Places and the feasts of the others as my own feasts.

Jerusalem has taught me that the world is a beautiful mosaic, one but with a variety of colors. Jerusalem has taught me the harmony between the one and the diverse. The one and the multiple are neither contradictory nor exclusive but that the one supposes the multiple and that the multiple is a prerequisite of the one.

Jerusalem has taught me that life is made of giving and receiving, where everyone has something to give and something to receive. What I give enriches the other and what I receive enriches me. It is between this giving and receiving that my humanity is shaped.

Jerusalem has taught me that my identity is not closed, but open, and that it is only completed if it is enriched by the identity of the other.

Jerusalem has taught me that peace and justice are inseparable. Both are divine predicates. To look for peace without justice is to cover flagrant injustices with a beautiful word.

Jerusalem has taught me that ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and the dialogue of cultures and peoples place us, on the one hand, with our weaknesses and our sins and, on the other, with our responsibilities and our immense possibilities. Hence, they place us in front of our humanity. And Jerusalem is the proper place of it.

Jerusalem has taught me to enlarge the spaces of my conscience to become a universal conscience, without any borders and walls. I breathe in the universal, in order not to suffocate.

Jerusalem has taught me that relationship is a process of life or death, a Paschal process par excellence. In Jerusalem, one cannot live without dying, dying to the destructive aspects of our humanity to enable the energies of life in us.

Jerusalem has taught me that the relation with the other is decisive to build up my humanity. But Jerusalem has taught me also that this relation is a crucified one and that relation in an unfulfilled project, which demands from us a continuous spiritual struggle.

Jerusalem has taught me that love is essential for building up a human world and that love is always a crucified and unachieved reality, which can survive only by purifying itself incessantly.

Jerusalem has taught me to cross the borders of its quarters to meet on the other side with a hidden aspect of my humanity without which I remain unachieved. Jerusalem has taught me to transform walls into bridges.

Jerusalem has taught me that God is in every atom of its space and that God is not a tribal or a confessional God, but a merciful one, friend of every human being, of all human beings. Jerusalem has taught me that God is my way to humanity and humanity is my way to God.

Jerusalem has taught me to serve God, not to use Him, to do His will, not to submit Him to my instincts, to elevate myself to the highness of His holiness and not to lower Him to the misery of my sins.

Jerusalem has taught me that time and eternity are not contradictory. I tend towards eternity without forgetting

my commitment in time, and I commit in time without forgetting eternity. Time and eternity are the two inseparable and complementary faces of human existence.

Jerusalem has taught me that the triangle that shapes our human identity is God — myself — the other. The three parts of this triangle are linked organically with each other. To aggress against one is to aggress against them all. I do not exist without the other and neither of us without God.

Jerusalem has taught me to look for the energies of life in me and around me to enhance them and to discover the forces of death in me and around me to fight them.

Jerusalem has taught me that the mystery of life is enclosed in an empty tomb, where lies the body of Who destroyed in his own body the dividing wall that separates the two communities so as to create one community.

14

MEMORIES OF JERUSALEM

Nahida Halaby Gordon

DR. NAHIDA HALABY GORDON, professor emerita at Case Western Reserve University, served as Senior Fulbright Scholar at Birzeit University, Palestine. A life-long Presbyterian, she is a church Elder and serves on several Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) committees. Professor Gordon is a Palestinian-American who experienced, first hand, the 1948 Palestinian *Nakba*. Her book, *Palestine is Our Home: Voices of Loss, Courage, and Steadfastness*, is an expression of her passion for peace and justice for the people of Palestine. In addition to extensive professional publications, Professor Gordon's articles on Palestine have appeared in *The Electronic Intifada*, *Mondoweiss*, *CounterPunch*, and *Unbound*.

Growing up in Palestine, Jerusalem was the center of my world. It is in Jerusalem that I was born and it is there that my extended family lived. My father was a businessman and imported automobiles, appliances, and other products — so for business reasons he moved his family to Jaffa to be near its port. I was two years old then. Even though we lived in Jaffa, our lives revolved around family and frequent trips by automobile to Jerusalem where we would have a big family gathering with my grandmother and all my aunts, uncles, and cousins. These are wonderful memories that stay with me always. It is in Jerusalem and at these family gatherings that family bonds were formed that survived exile and life many continents apart. After the passage of many decades and with the advent of easy travel and communication, we continued close relationship with our cousins.

My grandmothers both lived in Baq'aa Tahta, a suburb of Jerusalem. Today, Baq'aa is in West Jerusalem and a visit to Jerusalem allows me the opportunity to see my grandmother's house again. Since my early childhood, years were spent in Jaffa where we had an urban lifestyle, visits to my grandmother were visits to the countryside since she, though she lived in a suburb of Jerusalem, had enough land around her house to be able to have a little garden with a fountain filled with fish, a chicken coop under a grand old fig tree, a lemon tree with wonderful fragrant lemons, a mulburry tree, and other wonders. I especially remember the Jasmine bush she had near her front door. So many years later, I yet keep my memories of that Jerusalem garden. I remember its layout, the type of trees it had, and the smells and sounds of Jerusalem that it afforded me. As an adult living as an exile in the United States, I have always wanted to recreate that sense of bliss and wonder I experienced in that garden. Alas, Jerusalem weather and the weather where I now live are so different that I have not been able to recreate my grandmother's garden.

The fountain was a source of many hours of fun. Putting my finger on the water spout in the middle of the fountain allowed me to spray water over a larger part of the garden and it was a game to see if I could douse our siblings with water. I love gravel walkways because they bring to my mind the sound my feet made as I walked on the fine gravel of the garden's walkway. The grand old fig tree was easy to climb and had a long smooth branch overhanging the chicken coop. I used to take a small bag of feed and throw the feed to the chickens

below. I observed chicken behavior — at times they picked on one smaller and weeker. Sometimes, this chicken would be pecked so much it would bleed from its head. Is this any different than what humans do to each other? Maybe it was a harbinger of what the Israelis did to us Palestinians.

On longer visits to my grandmother's house during the school summer vacation, I would be dressed up with an old dress of my aunt's and would climb the mulbury tree and harvest the mulberrys. The tree had a swing at which I spent much time daydreaming and enjoying the light and sound of Jerusalem. These are all wonderful and dear memories that keep Jerusalem alive to me. My grandmother's garden has become a symbol of the sweet Jerusalem that is now lost to me.

On my last visit to Jerusalem, I and my husband went to see my grandmother's house. The garden was trashed. All the delights I remembered were gone. The house inside was divided into several units. All the open space around the house was built up with other housing units. The experience brought tears to my eyes and I felt that that visit was a death to my fond memories of Jerusalem.

I am old enough to remember Palestine before its partition. Through the eyes of a child, I remember the sweetness of Palestine — the abundance and beauty of its land and above all the friends and acquaintances: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. As an adult, I have learned of the history of Palestine and have understood the tumultuous stage upon which I was born.

Memories of Palestine, nevertheless, live and provide an anchor for life. Life in Palestine was a rich blend of three faiths and many cultures. One of the most pleasant memories I have is the sound of Jerusalem waking up in the morning. Waking up gently in a warm bed at my grandmother's home, I remember the distant Muslim call to prayer before dawn, followed by the sound of a lone motor car passing in the street outside, the cooing of the mourning dove, then of a cacophony of motor cars and people passing outside my window, culminating in the full sound of a wide-awake Jerusalem. Other sounds live in my memory. The first time I heard the sad toll of Jerusalem's church bells on Good Friday, I was puzzled, but then the look on my grandmother's face told me that this was a very solemn occasion indeed. Someone close and beloved to my grandmother had died. It was the day of the Funeral Mass for Jesus in many Jerusalem churches. But, on Sunday, the glorious toll of the Church bells rang out in celebration of the Resurrection and of life.

The tragedy of Palestine is that powerful outside forces shaped our lives and the lives of its new Jewish immigrants. These outside forces continue to shape the Palestine-Israel conflict, frequently more for ill than good.

If one were to visit Palestine and speak to its people today, one would find that by far the majority of Palestinians seek peace and yearn for a time when they will be free to enjoy life in its fullest without restrictions on their movements, to build a life for themselves and children, and to have their own nationality so that they can move freely as full citizens in the

world. They only wish for the freedoms enjoyed by us here in the United States.

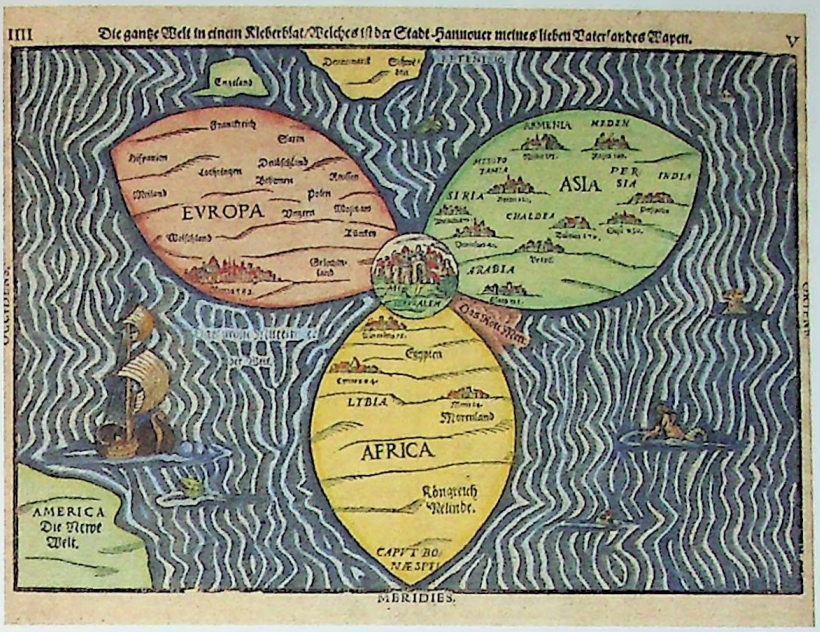
However, it is sad to see the daily reality of the occupation in the Palestinian Territories — and particularly so in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Life contains uncertainties and fear: the fear of having one's house demolished, fear of deportation, fear of the inability to have sufficient food to feed one's family, fear of not being able to reach a hospital in case of an emergency, fear of arrest, and fear of sudden death due to violence. These are some of the daily fears experienced by Palestinian Christians and Muslims. The people of Israel, understandably, have their own fears, partly from tragic and sad memories of their past and partly from the inflated fear of retaliatory actions from Palestinians in response to the daily trials, humiliations, and repressions of living under occupation.

The Christian presence in Palestine is dwindling. There are many causes, but the main cause is the difficulties and uncertainties of life under the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in Israel. The proportion of Christians is dwindling to a precariously low level, and estimates as low as 1.2 percent of the population are frequently cited. The land where Jesus was born, lived, taught, and witnessed to God is in danger of losing its entire population of Christians. This is a reality that saddens me; it is as if I can hear the sad toll of Jerusalem's church bells on Good Friday from my childhood. But, as I now embody the Easter Faith of my grandmother, I know that this is not the end

— as I pray that I will hear the glorious toll of the Church bells ringing out in celebration of the Resurrection in my lifetime.

It is this abundance of life that flows from the Resurrection that inspires us to help bring justice to Palestine/Israel. This is not a justice where one party or the other triumphs, but is a justice built upon truth telling, repentance, and forgiveness. The involvement of our Church in making recommendations can only further our testimony to the truth, though the painful reality from my Palestinian-American perspective is that these recommendations fall short of acknowledging the full truth and of speaking truth to power. There are powerful governmental forces that contribute to the conflict, and Church recommendations have not made a difference for the past 66 years and will probably not make any difference in the future unless the people demand change from their governments.[51]

Jerusalem in centuries past was thought to be the center of the world. For Christians, Jerusalem, as the center of the world is portrayed in a map published in 1581 by Heinrich Bunting. By today's standards of cartography it is a whimsical portrayal. Bunting was a protestant pastor who imagined Jerusalem at the center of the old known world with three continents as the petals of a flower. The number three brings to mind the Christian Trinity.



Map by Heinrich Bunting, a German Protestant pastor, first published in 1581

Unfortunately, the dead stones of Jerusalem and Palestine were more important to Christians in the West than the "living stones." In my more sad moments, I think of the Church, as well as much of Western Christianity, as complicit in not only the theft of my home, but also the loss of a life lived within my Palestinian community. I was robbed of living as a Palestinian among other Palestinians near my extended family in my ancestral homeland. The Bible, the basis of my faith, has been used to dispossess me of the land where I was born and of the people to whom I belonged.

I am now a grandmother, happily married to my husband for more than five decades. We are immensely proud of and

grateful for our three children and four grandchildren. My husband's ancestors immigrated to America in order to escape political persecution in Scotland and Germany many decades before the founding of the United States. Even though I live continents away from Jerusalem, it continues to be the center of my world. It is clear to me that I have conveyed this feeling to my children and grandchildren. I will end with the following exchange of mail with one of my granddaughters.[52]

Dear Teta,

When I was traveling with my fellow students from Berkeley to Palestine, I took the time to find and visit the house where your Teta [grandmother] lived. I am sending you a jar. Inside the jar are rocks, earth, and other things that I picked up when I went to visit your Teta's house in Jerusalem. The ground was torn up from construction, but I knew this earth was the earth your grandmother and your family lived on. It is your land, so I wanted you to keep a piece of it with you. I love you!

Madison

Dear Madison,

I am moved beyond words knowing that you understand and care about my feelings for my lost homeland. I am getting old now and will probably never live long enough to see my dream of returning to my home in Palestine. The Nakba tore our lives up so that we lost not only our homes, but also something much more valuable — our communities and the freedom to live our lives as Palestinians in our own land. With passing time, it is now difficult to see how we can live our dreams of return, but we can hold onto wonderful memories of home and family. These rocks and this earth will help me remember.

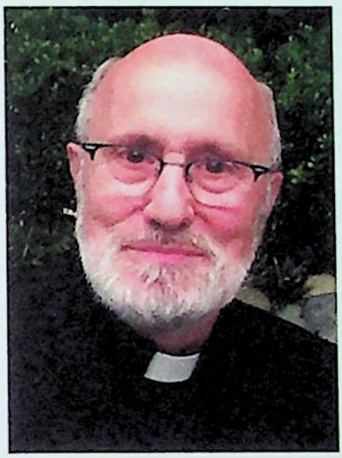
Most of all, dear granddaughter, I treasure that you understand our loss and hold our memories of our old lives to be dear. I am proud of your intelligence and your sensitivity. I am confident that you will live a life dedicated to justice for those who are dispossessed. Keep Palestine and Palestinians close to your heart and pray as I do for a free Palestine.

Love,
Teta

15

JERUSALEM:
THE SOURCE OF OUR IDENTITY

George Makhlouf



FATHER GEORGE MAKHLOUF, born in West Jerusalem before the *Al-Nakba* (literally "catastrophe"; the 1948 Palestinian exodus and dispossession) and raised in East Jerusalem, is a retired Antiochian priest who was ordained in Jerusalem in 1985 and has served in Ramallah and New York. He received his education in Terra Sancta School in Jerusalem and Collège des Frères in Bethlehem, followed by theological studies in Jerusalem, France, and Lebanon. As Pastor Emeritus, he is attached to St. Elias Antiochian Church in Atlanta, GA and lives in Duluth, GA, USA.

My heavy accent and my complexion continuously reveal to the unknown that I came from a different country. So, when I am asked, "where are you from," my answer has always been: "I am a Palestinian from Jerusalem."

As well as having national identity, we also have a religious identity. I am also Christian from Palestine. I am from the infamous biblical city of Jerusalem. Christianity is a factor of identity that usually has no regard to one's national background. However, in my case, Jerusalem is also the source of Christian identity because the church itself was born in Jerusalem. We call the Feast of Pentecost "the Birthday of the Church" because the church was founded in JERUSALEM on the day of Pentecost.

So, as a Jerusalemite, Jerusalem, to me is a dual source of identity. It is the place of my birth and the birthplace of the Church. I find it only fitting that I divulge the parallels and

meanings of Jerusalem that are the basis to the understanding of Christianity.

Liturgical hymns shed light on what Jerusalem means to Christians. Saint John of Damascus who lived in Mar Saba or St. Sabbas the Sanctified Orthodox Monastery, which is only a few miles Southeast from the Holy City of Jerusalem, had composed the liturgical hymns of Pascha (referred to as "Easter" in the West). In his hymns, he compared heaven with Jerusalem. He called heavens "the upper Jerusalem" as well as "the New Jerusalem." St. Paul also used the same analogy, six centuries before Saint John of Damascus. He said specifically, "The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother" (Gal. 4:16). Moreover, the references to Jerusalem are frequent in other Liturgical hymns as well. We chant calling Jerusalem the "Holy, Mother of Churches and Dwelling of God praising and entreating her: "Rejoice and be glad because you were the first to receive salvation through Resurrection." Hymns are a gateway to the interpretation of the depiction of the biblical references to Jerusalem through words and sound.

However, icons also depict these biblical references via images. To us Christians, Jerusalem is a venerated icon. Holy icons are written by devoted iconographic artists. But, in the case of Jerusalem, this Holy icon is written by God Himself for He had chosen it to be the venue of Divine Economy and the History of Salvation. Jerusalem is a Holy icon that is venerated by the faithful exactly as the icons of Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. In the past, Russian pilgrims used to walk from the seaport of Haifa

to Jerusalem, and when they reached Mount Scopus and saw the Holy City at a distance, they knelt down until their faces touched the earth. Jerusalem is the City of Peace. Jerusalem's name shows that. In Arabic, it is called, "al-Quds el-Sharif," which translates as "the Noble Holy City."

One cannot talk about the significance of Jerusalem to Christianity without analyzing the indigenous people of the city. These are the offspring of the saints, and descendants of the first community that Saint Luke talks about in the book of Acts. They are known as the "first community of Jerusalem." Their cultures and traditions embody the faith and the importance it has on their land. They are immersed in the magic of Jerusalem, which is proven in their traditions. Orthodox Christians believe that Holy Fire miraculously springs out from the tomb of Jesus once a year, and that is on Holy Saturday before the Eastern Pascha (Orthodox Easter), according to the old calendar. This Holy Fire depicts spiritual light representing the Resurrection of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christian people from the Middle East and Eastern Europe literally carry the Holy Fire to their countries using lanterns. This is always facilitated by the people of the land. Palestinians also come to Jerusalem from every town and village to bring the Holy Fire to their churches. A Russian priest last Easter brought the Holy Fire to Atlanta, and I saw it. This is one Holy tradition that also gives Jerusalem its great spiritual value.

Another phenomenon that has made the people of Jerusalem distinct is the sesame bread called (Ka'ek) or Palestinian bagel. Jerusalem is very famous with its sesame bread (Ka'ek).

Bakeries in the different towns of Palestine, the Middle East, and the Diaspora try to imitate the Jerusalem sesame bread, but fail to give it the same taste and flavor. People believe that the reason why the sesame bread in places other than Jerusalem does not taste the same is because Jerusalem is the most holy city in the world and only its people can make this infamous bread just right.

These people are following the footsteps of their Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ on the way of the Cross. They bear with Him suffering. They cry as Jesus once did saying, "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?" or translated, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me (Mark 15:34)?" However, as in the past, it is not God who has forsaken them, but it is their fellow Christian brothers, especially in the West, who have forsaken them. Even more, their fellow Christian brothers support their adversaries. It is good that pilgrims visit the holy sites of the Holy Land, but it is more important to visit the living stones who are the indigenous faithful of the Holy Land so as to understand that their presence over there gives meaning to the sanctuaries they are visiting. What is the value of sanctuaries if there are no faithful worshiping in them?

Due to the Israeli occupation and the hardship of the native people, the sacred city has an unstable future. If these hardships continue, the Holy Land will be lost because the Christians are leaving their ancestral homeland. And when they disappear, no one shall preserve the sacredness of the land for them. Jerusalem, besides being where the Church was founded on the day of Pentecost, it is also where the Good

News was delivered to the whole world. Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the world (Acts 1:8)." If it were not up to the indigenous people who accepted the Lord at that time, whose descendants are still living there and many of whom were chased out in 1948 and after, the world would not have known Christ and Christianity would have never existed. Palestinians have a certain experience that nobody else has. I realized that when I was young on my first trip to France. A Christian Palestinian who may visit a church anywhere in the world, or when he or she goes to church in the Diaspora and listens to the Gospel reading, he or she would be able to visualize the scriptural event clearer than most, as the venue is familiar to them! They feel that the scriptures speak to them more clearly than anybody else especially because they are more familiar with the culture and tradition.

Jerusalem is an open book that every stone in it speaks history. During the time when Jesus walked on earth it had witnessed various episodes of the life of Jesus. Jerusalem is a universal city. It is a shrine of three different faiths. It is the epic of history of three thousand years of faith. Jerusalem is truly the story of the world. It is even implied in the Bible to be home to the "second coming." It states in the book of Acts, "...and while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up form you into heaven, will come in the same

way as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:10, 11).'" With the psalmist I pledge, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy" (Psalms 137: 5-6).

16

AN IMPACTFUL SOJOURN IN JERUSALEM

David Mack

AMBASSADOR DAVID MACK, Retired, served for over 30 years in various positions in the United States Foreign Service. He held diplomatic assignments in Iraq, Jerusalem, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates. From 1990 to 1993, he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. From 1998 to 2008, Ambassador Mack was Vice President and Acting President of The Middle East Institute, a Washington-based educational organization. He is an elder at The National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC.

I cannot call Jerusalem my home or the home of my ancestors. Nor did I live in the city for even as long as one year. Nor is Jerusalem really the center of my own religious faith, even though the first Christians met and began their mission to the world in the streets, homes, and gathering places of that first century city. Nor have I been committed to the political future and economic vitality of Jerusalem in all of the ways that others can claim.

But, like many Christians, Muslims, and Jews, a brief time in Jerusalem has made unforgettable impacts on my thinking. These fall in three baskets — personal, political, and spiritual.

The Personal

Rosamond ("Roz"), a young woman I had met in graduate school, agreed to marry me when I was still on my first

assignment in Baghdad in 1966. This was the conclusion to a four-year romance, interrupted when we parted "forever," first when I went off to Cairo and then when I left again to Baghdad. Fortunately, I had persisted in writing her letters, which she had seemed to read with interest. Fortunately, also, I decided that being a bachelor diplomat in the Arab world was not a particularly good idea.

The trip to the wedding altar, however, was not smooth. Urgently reassigned to Amman, Jordan, and unable to go home for a wedding, I asked Roz to fly out for the ceremony. It was my good luck that she bought a one-way ticket to do so. After she arrived in Amman and I checked her into the Intercontinental Hotel, I started looking for a pastor who would do the job. It proved to be harder than I thought. I knew that none of the largely Arab Catholic churches would be willing to wed two American Protestants, and an Orthodox friend told me the same was true for the Arab Orthodox churches. I went to the only Protestant church in Amman, an Anglican church. Telling the vicar that I had been baptized as a Methodist and my wife as a Congregationalist, he told me that he might be able to perform the marriage. "Of course," he said, we would have to post bans." "Bans," I asked? "Yes," he replied, "to assure there is no impediment" "And how long would this take?" "Oh, a matter of a few weeks, just be sure." Thinking quickly, I said, "Here's the thing. I am just a Vice Consul at the U.S. Embassy. It costs me dearly to keep my fiancée at the Intercontinental. The temptation to have her move into my apartment is great, and I am sure that the church would not

want us to live in sin." "You have a point there," said the vicar. "We do have an Archbishop in Jerusalem. Perhaps he could make an exception."

Thanks to the friendly vicar and an accommodating Anglican (Episcopal) hierarchy in East Jerusalem, they waived bans and invited us to marry in the Cathedral Church of St. George the Martyr. St. George's Church is a short walk from the Garden Tomb, which is regarded by several Protestant denominations as the site where Jesus Christ died and was resurrected, in contrast to Catholic and Orthodox denominations that consider the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be the place.

Roz and I drove down from Amman, registered for one night in separate rooms at the American Colony Hotel, followed by two more nights in a double room for our honeymoon as American tourists in Jerusalem. Fifty-one years later, she continues to put up with me! Jerusalem was a blessed way to start our married life.

The Political

After the June 1967 War, the U.S. State Department transferred us from Amman to Jerusalem, where I was to open a Visa Office. Visas had not been issued in Jerusalem since 1949. Visa applicants from the Israeli administered side of the city had to go to Tel Aviv, while applicants from Jordanian administered East Jerusalem and the West Bank had to go to Amman. I had been doing visa work in Amman with Palestinians and

other Jordanians until war closed the Jordan River bridges, so I was chosen to do the job as a nine-month assignment. In consultation with Washington, I argued that we should treat Israelis and Palestinians, as well as other nationalities, equally in a single Visa Office on Nablus Road, not far from St. George's Church. I would recruit three additional employees to add to the existing Palestinian and Israeli employees working on consular affairs. All three would need to know Hebrew and Arabic as well as English. From those who applied, we hired two Israeli Arab Christians and one Israeli Jewish woman of Iraqi origin. Add that to a consular waiting room where there were Hasidic Jewish men with side curls sitting next to Arab men in *kaffiehs* and, presto, we had a fully integrated Israeli and Palestinian work place.

We held our breath. For Jerusalem in summer 1967, this was a novel experiment. Israeli Mayor Teddy Kollek wanted to have similar examples of a fully united Jerusalem in many areas of life but made nearly no progress for the year I was there. Even today, examples of such integration are not common.

A story that stood out for me relates to Olive, the invaluable Israeli Jewish woman of Iraqi origin. She had come to us at a time when many Jewish immigrants to Israel from Arab countries felt that they were victims of discrimination by the dominant European origin Israelis who had most of the political and socioeconomic power. Having served in Iraq, I established quick rapport with Olive and hired her after a brief interview. She fit in beautifully with the Palestinian employees

of the consular section. Moreover, she got along with the Polish origin Israeli employee who had been assigned to the consular section to help us get started. The latter was both a much needed Hebrew-English interpreter and advisor to me. She was also someone who would let the Israeli government know what we were doing and assure the Israeli community that they would be safe venturing to Nablus Road for their visas and other consular services.

Visiting years later, I found that Olive had unconsciously created a few problems of public perception for the Consulate General. The *Jerusalem Post* published an angry letter from an American visitor to Jerusalem, asserting that the Consulate General would hire no Israelis, and that the Palestinian personnel were rude to American Jews and to Israelis. When I asked the Consul General about this, he smiled and said, "It's Olive they are complaining about." The visitor had seen this completely bi-cultural woman laughing and talking with Palestinians, but when an Israeli came forward she would switch on her business-like Israeli personality, with a brusque, "Yes. What do you want?" Even with the best of intentions, cross-cultural communication has pitfalls.

After my time in Jerusalem, I never bought into the notion that conflict between Palestinians and Israelis was inevitable. When they shared a goal — like getting visas to the United States — they could cooperate very well. To this day, I believe that can be true for much grander goals, like sharing Jerusalem as a capital for both peoples. But that will only happen if the

political leaders on both sides learn to treat one another's aspirations with mutual respect.

In retrospect, I was in Jerusalem at a time when the nature of the conflict between Palestinians and Israel was changing. Prior to the occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the conflict was part of the clash of two national movements — Arab nationalism and Zionism. As the occupation became more permanent and rigid, the conflict came to be defined in religious terms — a conflict between Muslims and Jews, while Christians had complicated relationships with the adherents to the two other faiths.

Jerusalem is critical. A city holy to three religions, Jerusalem is also a central part of the national narratives of both Israelis and Arabs. Among Arabs, this is especially true for Palestinians, whether they are Muslim or Christian. Instead of being a unifying factor, Jerusalem is a dispute.

For most of the history of U.S. entanglement with the Arab-Israel conflict, various U.S. administrations have tried to make peace between the conflicting parties. After the establishment of the state of Israel, the U.S. Consulate General was made a separate diplomatic entity from the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. Administratively, it had offices on each side of the Green Line, but the two offices reported to a single Consul General who, in turn, reported directly to the U.S. State Department. After the break-up of the British Mandate for Palestine, the U.S. government tended to view Jerusalem as a "corpus separatum" or separate entity. We hoped the city could be shared by Palestinians and Israelis through a formula that also provided

access to the Holy places of all three religions. Ideally, that access would be guaranteed by two sovereign states, as well as the United Nations along with other governments, such as the Jordan Government. Although it might not be possible in the end, we looked for something other than a re-division of the city. Various schemes were discussed with the parties to the conflict, increasingly the state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To date, these efforts have failed. It is important, I believe, for American diplomats to keep trying to focus the parties on ways to make a settlement on Jerusalem fit into the larger puzzle. Only then can Jerusalem be a true city of peace, rather than the spoils of war.

The Spiritual

Where my diplomatic life connects directly with my spiritual life is in the words of the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Too often, American leaders have approached Jerusalem with a focus on their domestic political interests, rather than a commitment to faith values that most Americans claim as their heritage.

Growing up in Oregon, I attended a very Bible-oriented church in rural Sam's Valley. I learned the stories involving Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land. By the time I graduated from college, I was thinking of Jerusalem in the more symbolic sense that is common for what we might call

Reformed Protestant Christians. While working in Jerusalem and in various Muslim countries, I began to view some of the Bible stories in the painful context of on-going, real-life disputes. Now, I am struggling to have a deeper understanding of the spiritual truths about Jerusalem that should guide us.

17

EMBRACING JERUSALEM: A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY OF DELIGHT AND DISORIENTATION

Carl S. Hofmann

THE REV. DR. CARL S. HOFMANN (B.A. University of California, Berkeley; M.Div and D.Min, Fuller Theological Seminary) has served as associate pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Boulder, Colorado for more than 15 years. A native Southern Californian, Carl is married to Rupali and they have two young adult children, Jason and Jordan. Carl enjoys craft coffee and cycling the steep mountain passes of Colorado. Carl has made pilgrimage to the Holy Land four times with a fifth pilgrimage currently in the planning stages.

> *"I was glad when they said to me,*
> *'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'*
> *Our feet are standing*
> *within your gates, O Jerusalem."*
> *(Psalms 122:1-2)*

I'll never forget my first pilgrimage to Jerusalem: confronted by its layers and juxtapositions, its contrasts and contradictions, I was overwhelmed. Wherever I turned there was ancient and modern, East and West, Old City quarters running together, clashing and cacophonous. I saw Blockbuster video stores abutting archaeological digs, McDonald's fast-food next door to falafel stands. I heard muezzin calls to worship and shofar horns blowing, reverent pilgrim hymns punctuated by the sonic booms of F-15s. I marveled at long-bearded Greek priests in ancient garb using cutting-edge cell phones. Layers. Contradictions. Juxtapositions. Jerusalem. And all the city's diversity seemed sheathed in the same white limestone which

glistened in the late spring sun. Jerusalem is dizzying, the pilgrim twirled by its sights and sounds and smells, lift up and cast down. Jerusalem wows with its ancient legacy and modern complexity, secular and spiritual swirling round and round in a vertiginous vortex.

For some, the blend is too potent; the mind and heart and soul grow overwhelmed and a psychological malady known as "Jerusalem Syndrome" sets in. One sees such afflicted from time to time, gibbering and confused. On some level, all sensitive pilgrims can feel a bit this way. Jerusalem is unique among the world's cities. It stuns, confounds, and confuses; it causes the human spirit to soar to the heavens... and crash back down to the earth. It calls forth veneration and condemnation, hope and despair.

So how does a Christian like me respond? Initially, especially at some distance, it's easy to be infatuated with Jerusalem, to idealize it and to super-spiritualize its significance. But with repeated visits comes greater comprehension of its complexities. One could claim it as the center of our faith, the source of our identity, the fount of our salvation. But that would be to mistake Jerusalem for its greatest gift: our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus provides the most appropriate counter-measure to a mistaken veneration of this complex city. Jesus honored Jerusalem — and judged it. Jesus attended its annual celebrations and made pilgrimage; and yet he condemned its concomitant corruption. Jesus cherished the city's significance but refused to make it central. In fact, his mission mandate to

the early church was to begin in Jerusalem and then take the gospel to the farthest ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Jesus took a similar approach to Jerusalem's holy architecture and real estate. While he honored it, he moved well beyond it. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it," he said. The Apostle John makes clear that the temple Jesus had in mind was his body, a worship space far more profound than that on the Temple Mount (John 2:19-21). Jesus globalizes and universalizes what Jerusalem initiates and illustrates. Now, in Christ alone is worship space marked out; in Christ alone is God properly worshiped and the diverse people of the world gathered in divine worship. What was once centripetal is now centrifugal. Where once all nations streamed to Jerusalem and its temple, now in Christ they are commanded to go out to all places and people, embracing them and enfolding them in Christ to a universal temple, his worldwide Body, the Church (Ephesians 2:21-22). The Jerusalem toward which the Bible ultimately points is the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21. Only here is ultimate peace, the concord of nations made one in Jesus Christ. In this New Jerusalem one finds no temple "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22). Journeying to this heavenly city is our ultimate pilgrimage, the final destiny of the diverse faithful gathered in Jesus Christ the Lord.

So what does one do with modern Jerusalem, with all its contradictions and consternation? What does one do with its layers and juxtapositions that dizzy and disorient us? Two ideas may guide us. The first is an analogy to the doctrine

of incarnation. The second is the import of the phrase so beautifully employed by the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF), that of "living stones."

First, the idea of incarnation: this is the conviction all Christians share regarding Christ's dual nature. Jesus is both divine and human; he alone is divinity and humanity inextricably linked in mystery and wonder. To emphasize either to the exclusion of the other is to land in heresy and run off the rails. Jesus is God… and Jesus is human. To exalt his divinity at the expense of his humanity is the error of Docetism, a super-supernaturalism that denies the humanness of Jesus. Or, as some have said, somewhat jestingly, it is to be so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly good. But the opposite error is equally bad: it is to make Jesus only human and so to miss his divinity and mistake the faith entirely. We mustn't over- or under-exalt Jesus. And I think the same applies to Jerusalem: Jerusalem is divinely intended as a place of worship and revelation. Unique among the cities of the world, God has chosen it to reveal divinity, but to do so amidst earthly, human realities — tribalism, battles, corruption, and wickedness. Jerusalem soars and sinks, exalts itself and is debased. In God's purposes, Jerusalem hosts humanity and divinity intermingled and interacting — all for the purpose of its central figure, Jesus Christ. Jerusalem at its best is a pointer to him and to his kingdom purposes. And so we admire Jerusalem, but we don't idolize it. We look at it gratefully and respectfully, but we don't overlook its shortcomings and injustices, its rivalries and divisions. We seek its shalom, yes,

indeed (Psalms 122:6-9) but it is a shalom for all: spiritual and secular, Jew and Christian and Muslim, and for any and all others who make it their home. Following Jesus' example, we honor Jerusalem, but we hold it accountable to all that God reveals, in seeking the shalom of all, in justice and mercy, and in compassion for alien, orphan, and widow.

Not only is incarnation an important analogy for responding to modern Jerusalem, but so too is the concept of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:4-5). What the pilgrim quickly realizes in arriving in the Holy Land is that it is a place of stones: wherever one looks, there are rocks. And as any good student knows of the Bible and the Jewish people, these stones were often used as *ebenezers*, place markers of God's faithfulness, provision, and help (1 Samuel 7:12). Stones are stacked on one another to mark places of prominence where God has been uniquely present and active with God's people. Too many pilgrimages come to the Holy Land to venerate only the ancient stones of buildings preserved, restored, or recently unearthed. Granted, these are valuable markers to our past; but a sole focus on the ancient stones can blind us to the living stones, the people of God alive in the land, wrestling with faith and doubt and laboring to live and work and raise their families under great duress. HCEF's "living stones pilgrimages" strive to expose pilgrims to stones both ancient and living. Such experiences refuse to keep Jesus only in the past; rather, they show how his people and his kingdom values are alive and at work in the present. Honor and respect, love and service, are due not just to the past and what God did then, but also to the present and what

the Lord is doing now. So, too, it is with Jerusalem. We refuse to revel only in its past, focusing on glory gone by, neglecting to observe and care and respond to what's happening now. No, we try to connect the dots and read our Bibles and view the land in ways that show that Jesus was alive there then and is alive there and everywhere now. God's will revealed then comports with God's revealed will now. These bifocals help us read our Bibles with much greater faithfulness.

And so we seek a balanced approach to this great city, this seat of so much history, so much glory, and so much pain. We open ourselves to all its lessons; we receive its warnings and remember its legacies with sober celebration. Above all, we recall the transformative and unsettling words uttered by the angel so long ago in Jerusalem at Christ's tomb: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here — he is risen!" (Luke 24:5). Jesus is risen and he alone is our focus of worship and adoration. With his heart and eyes, newly alive, we return to this important place and receive its gifts and embrace its difficult lessons with humility and wonder. Above all, we keep our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, whose work in Jerusalem extends from the city to the world and from time to eternity.

18

JERUSALEM, MEDJUGORJE, SARAJEVO
A WORLD PRAYER MOVEMENT FOR PEACE

Sabrina Čović Radojičić

MS. SABRINA ČOVIĆ RADOJIČIĆ was born in Osijek (Croatia) in 1966. Although she grew up in Paris, she frequently travelled to the United States. A close friend of the Medjugorje seers, she is an author and translator of a range of books, and has directed documentaries about Medjugorje that are available on both video and CD. She is co-founder of the international prayer movement "Maranatha-Conversion."

When I was invited to share my reflections about Jerusalem, I thought it was going to be easy. Don't we all have so much to say about Jerusalem? Isn't Jerusalem the only city in the world that millions of people, even if they have never been there, consider to be "home"? But, in fact, it wasn't that easy because it forced me to think about what Jerusalem means to me.

I cannot separate Jerusalem from Bethlehem and Nazareth. The three cities go together in my heart, as they cover the passage of Jesus from birth to resurrection. For so many of us, Jerusalem is our spiritual center. When true peace comes to Jerusalem, it will come to the whole world as well.

I was born in a country that no longer exists. I am Croatian but I was born in Yugoslavia. I can understand Palestinians born in the Holy Land before 1948 when they try to explain to me the strange feeling that the Palestine of their ancestors or birth doesn't exist anymore. Although raised in France and later in the United States, I feel that I am a citizen of the world.

In 1989, I fell in love with a special village called Medjugorje in Bosnia Herzegovina. It is a place where Mary, the mother of Jesus, has started appearing in 1981. Since then, she has been giving messages of world peace. Millions of pilgrims have

been to Medjugorje and they say that it has changed their lives. I have dedicated my life to answer Our Lady's call.

As a little girl, I dreamt of how it would be wonderful to have the chance to be in the Holy Land with Our Lady:

1. In Jerusalem where she was born "sinless" and presented at the age of three years by her parents Joachim and Anne to the Temple of God.
2. In Nazareth where the Archangel Gabriel informed her that she would give birth to Jesus saying: "Greeting, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:26);
3. In Jerusalem where Mary brought Jesus to the Temple, as her parents brought her years earlier, to present him to the Lord and to hear the prophecy of Simeon regarding the pain and suffering she would experience throughout her life as Jesus' mother — "Yea, a sword shall piece through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35);
4. In Bethlehem where "she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7);
5. In Nazareth where she and Joseph raised the child and young man Jesus; and
6. In Jerusalem where she walked in Jesus' footsteps on his way to the cross, and watched him being crucified and giving up his spirit.

What hardship, what pain and sorrow must she have endured but, in the end, crucifixion led to a glorious resurrection.

Later, I dreamt of being in the Holy Land with multitudes who joined us to pray, to dream with us, to rejoice with us. I dreamt of us all being there with Our Lady so I asked visionary Vicka Ivankovic-Mitjatovic to come with us, and she did!

The first international "Maranatha-Conversion" pilgrimage was held in the Holy Land in August 2013. Thousands of people came to the prayer meetings. Every day, we prayed in another holy place, with Vicka having the apparition of Our Lady, and we were all there, gathered around Her, praying.

My dream had come true because of all the wonderful people that collaborated to make it real! It takes many minds and hearts to make good things happen.

So many miracles occurred during that week and it will probably stay as a turning point in my life. The pilgrimage made me aware how much I love Jerusalem and the Holy Land and how important the link is between Medjugorje and the Holy Land, but also the city of Sarajevo in Bosnia Herzegovina, which the last three popes have called "the Jerusalem of Europe." Let's unite them because when we do pure miracles will occur.

My husband Vladan and I have two wonderful children. I have family and so many friends around the world. I cannot just sit and watch as the world gets destroyed by dark forces. Perhaps I do not have the external power to change all these forces, but I have the burning desire to fight in the spiritual battle against the Invisible. In Medjugorje, Our Lady told us that Satan wanted to destroy life and even our entire planet. People need to comprehend this reality, otherwise nothing will

change. If it's a spiritual war, then we need to fight with the spiritual weapons the Lord gave us: prayer and fasting.

At Medjugorje, Our Lady said that with prayer and fasting not only could wars be stopped, but also natural events could be changed. Moreover, she said, "Individually, my children, you cannot stop the evil that wants to govern the world and destroy it, but by the will of God, all together with my Son, you can do everything and heal the world!"

The Church expects nothing less than the return of Jesus in "glory" (and not with his earthly body). His coming and only his coming will annihilate the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2, 8). He will come back for a "restoration" and a "regeneration" (Matthew 19:28, Acts 3, 21), fulfilling the reign of God "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6, 10), before "putting back" the Kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15, 22-28).

My dream is that all of you who read this essay understand what it means, and join us, and that millions of people of good will, of all spiritual traditions, join us as well.... Let's all gather in Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land to pray and fast. Together, we will realize the promises of Jesus, the promises given by His Mother, Queen of Peace. They cannot do it without us, they need our active participation.

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THE EARTHLY JERUSALEM: CAPTIVE AND TRANSFORMED

James J. Zogby

DR. JAMES J. ZOGBY is president of the Arab American Institute. He was appointed by President Barack Obama to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom in 2013. In addition to writing a weekly column published in 16 countries, Zogby is the creator and host of the award-winning call-in political television show "Viewpoint" and is frequently featured on national and international media. In 2010, Zogby published the highly-acclaimed book, *Arab Voices: What They Are Saying to Us and Why It Matters.* His 2013 e-book, *Looking at Iran: The Rise and Fall of Iran in Arab Public Opinion*, is drawn from his extensive polling across the Middle East with Zogby Research Services.

I first visited Jerusalem 23 years ago. I was there in my capacity as co-Chair of Builders for Peace, an American initiative launched by then Vice President Al Gore of Jewish and Arab American business leaders working to find ways to grow the Palestinian economy.

We stayed at the Palestinian-owned Ambassador Hotel — from which we could see the Dome of the Rock and the Mount of Olives. Early in my visit, I made a point of going to the Old City, walking its narrow passage ways. And I visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the magnificent Haram Al Sharif with its holy mosque. I also went to see the Wailing Wall. Witnessing Christians, Muslims, and Jews praying in such close proximity of one another, it is impossible not be moved by the city's immense religious significance. This is

the reality of the heavenly Jerusalem — spiritual center for the Abrahamic faiths.

There is, however, another Jerusalem. As I continued to come to the city, during the rest of the 1990s, I became acutely aware of another, all too often overlooked, aspect of Jerusalem and that is the fact that it was the center of life for millions of Palestinians. This is the earthly Jerusalem and it the story of this city that I want to tell.

Jerusalem was, as Faisal Husseini pointed out to me, the metropol. It was the beating heart of Palestinian life — the hub of their economic, cultural, social, and political activity. The city was not only the home of Palestine's most important religious sites and institutions, it was where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians throughout the occupied territories came to work or shop, go to school, receive medical treatment or social services, attend cultural events, or consult with professionals of all types. Even without a state, Jerusalem performed all of the functions of a capital. It played the role that Washington, or Paris, or London play to the regions that surround them.

After the Israelis occupied all of Palestine in 1967, it wasn't always easy for Palestinians to gain access to the city. There were periodic closures and checkpoints with which they had to contend. But, for the most part, even with the burdens imposed by the Israeli authorities, Jerusalem remained the hub.

One way that occupiers control perceptions is by naming their handiwork. The Israeli construct "Greater Jerusalem" is a misnomer. When the Israelis announced this fiction a few years

after the 1967 war, it included not just the eastern part of the city but a large swatch of West Bank land that included 28 other Palestinian villages. To mask this crime of illegal annexation, Israel began to call these villages "Arab neighborhoods," while referring to their settlements as "Jewish neighborhoods" of Jerusalem.

Palestinian life changed dramatically in 1994 after a Jewish terrorist massacred 29 Muslim worshipers in a Hebron mosque. Fearing a Palestinian reaction, then Prime Minister Rabin imposed a closure — one that would never be lifted. In the years that followed, the closure became intense with more rigorous enforcement. Permits to enter the city became more difficult to obtain. Palestinian institutions in the city were shuttered and foreign groups were advised that they were forbidden from holding meetings of a political nature with Palestinians in the city.

All during this time settlements were growing. Even before Israel began building its notorious Wall, Jerusalem was being surrounded by a living concrete barrier. Standing on Jabal Hussein on the eastern outskirts of the city and looking to the north, east, and west, you could see ever-expanding Israeli settlements snaking up and down the hills enclosing the city with a wall of Jewish-only housing. Sandwiched in between some of them, you could make out smaller Palestinian villages. Their land had been taken for settlement construction and now these ancient communities were dwarfed by the new Israeli apartment compounds that were literally suffocating them. And to make matters more burdensome, there were massive

highways cutting through the landscape further dividing Palestinians from each other, taking their land, and separating them from access to their metropol of Arab Jerusalem.

The impact of all this was immediate and was felt in all areas of life. Just a few years after the permanent closure was imposed, unemployment in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas had risen to shocking levels. Because Palestinians from the West Bank could no longer easily make it into the city, businesses and social and medical service facilities had to lay off employees and professional service providers closed their offices. Commercial enterprises were likewise suffering, as were cultural institutions.

On future visits with Builders for Peace, I found that we could no longer meet with Palestinians in Jerusalem. On one occasion, I accompanied then Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown who was to speak with Palestinian businessmen at the Ambassador Hotel. Halfway through his talk, a large group of Palestinians got up to leave. He turned to me asking if he had said something that had offended them. When I caught up with them outside of the hotel, a few men in the departing group told me that they had very much wanted to remain, but because they had come from outside of Jerusalem they had to receive a special half-day pass from the Israeli military authorities. As it was getting late, they were forced to leave. If they missed the deadline for their return to the checkpoint, they feared they might either be arrested or disqualified from receiving permits in the future.

Late one night in Jerusalem, I engaged the night clerk at the Ambassador Hotel in conversation about what was happening to Jerusalemites. He had a Ph.D. in Psychology, but because patients could no longer come into the city, he had been forced to seek other employment. He feared that if he left the city to work in Ramallah, he would lose his Jerusalem residency. Because he knew that the Israelis wanted to depopulate the city of its Arab citizens, he insisted on remaining even if it meant working as a night clerk. His situation was not unusual. As a result, he noted, that there was widespread depression and a loss of hope. And he, worried aloud, that he didn't know where this would lead.

Meanwhile, outside the closed off Jerusalem, abnormal growth was taking a toll. Ramallah, itself choked off from normal expansion by Israeli land seizures, now came to serve as a substitute capital housing many of the functions that had once been in Jerusalem. Property values became too high for most residents and because the city became bloated with construction, congestion became burdensome.

Then came the construction of the Wall, which once again, Israel tried to camouflage by insisting it be called a "barrier." In fact, throughout the environs of Jerusalem it is a 28-foot concrete wall complete with watch towers at intervals along the way as it cuts through the West Bank and several Palestinian communities. It has completed the separation and strangulation of Arab Jerusalem, further impoverishing its citizens. And it has accelerated settlement construction the confiscation of

Palestinian land — creating captive Palestinian populations in "Greater Jerusalem" and its environs.

Within the Wall, thousands of Palestinian homes have been demolished by Israeli authorities because the Israelis say they were built without necessary permits — precisely because the Israelis will not issue permits to Palestinians. Thousands of Palestinians have had their residency in the city terminated either because they were forced to find work outside of the city or because they married someone from the West Bank and are not allowed to bring their spouses to live with them in the city. And the Israelis continue to take over more Palestinian properties in "Arab neighborhoods" turning them over to settler groups to create new hostile military-protected colonies in the heart of Arab areas. The entire situation is deplorable.

In short, while heavenly Jerusalem will live on, continuing to inspire the faithful of the three Abrahamic religions, the earthly Jerusalem is being transformed by the Israeli occupiers into a hell on earth for the 300,000 Palestinians who steadfastly remain in the city. Attention must be paid to this reality.

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JERUSALEM IS FADING FROM OUR SIGHT

Daoud Kuttab

MR. DAOUD KUTTAB is an award winning Palestinian journalist, TV producer, and former Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton University. He was the editor of the weekly English language *Al Fajr* and was the cofounder of the Jerusalem Film Institute. He studied at St. George's High School and has lived most of his adult life in Jerusalem. Follow him on twitter.com/daoudkuttab. Among the films he produced are *Palestinian Diaries*, *Bethlehem*, and *Jerusalem: Dealmaker or Dealbreaker*.

I often wonder about the future of Jerusalem, especially when it comes to Palestinian Christians. It seems that in the battle for the holy city and for the minds and hearts of people around the world, Jerusalem's future is often limited to the final status of the city's holy places, specifically those in the Old City of Jerusalem. And, even in this limited view, the focus of attention is often over how to finesse the Jewish-Islamic struggle over al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif ("the Noble Sanctuary"), which Jews call the Temple Mount. This location dates its history to the story of the patriarch of all monotheistic religions. It is the story of God calling on Father Abraham to sacrifice his son and at the last moment replacing his son with a sacrificial lamb is something I learned as a child in Sunday School.

But, while the location on Mount Moriah of where this historic story of faith occurred is important to Christians as well as Jews and Muslims, my faith has never been connected to stones.

I understand the importance of Jerusalem's churches, gardens, stones, and the like, which are connected to the arc of history and are part of the cradle of religions, but my interest and focus are somewhere else.

I am more interested in people, or as has been called often by Christian leaders, the living stones. My concern is not whether they stay or emigrate as is often the focus of much of the Palestinian Christian discussions but on the values, the ethos for human life, and the example that we, Palestinian Christians, hold dearly and portray in our own lives.

My approach to Jerusalem is a direct reflection on the words of Jesus, as recorded in John 4:23. When He was asked by the Samaritan woman near Jacob's well in Nablus about the importance of Jerusalem for worship, His response was: "true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth."

So, for me, the location and stones, while important, are not as much a priority as the search for the truth and living by the values of love and respect to all that Jesus taught when he lived on this earth.

My search for truth is probably the best feature that defines my life and career. I did not choose to become a journalist but somehow journalism found me and I found in it a vehicle for my lifelong search for the truth.

As I reflect on my life, my upbringing, my career, and what I value, the city of Jerusalem plays a big background role to many of my adventures, fears, joys, and aspirations.

While I was born in nearby Bethlehem, I grew up in Jerusalem, went to St. George's School just outside the gates

of the Old City. I was married in Jerusalem and all my children were born in Jerusalem. I made my career in journalism in Jerusalem and no matter how much I travel around the world, I am forever fascinated with the magic and the special feeling I have upon my return to it.

While Jerusalem has this magic about it, the years of occupation and the accumulation of anger, frustration, and hurt that it has brought with it has had its effect on me. As much as I love Jerusalem, I am often irritated with the city for the headaches it has given me and my family just for wanting to stay connected to it and to ensure our birthright in it. While using administrative and bureaucratic practices, there is no denying that the Israeli occupiers are intent on a continuous campaign aimed at ethnically cleansing Jerusalem from its Arab population.

My personal story and that of my family in clinging to our rights in Jerusalem and in fighting these evil legal maneuvers could fill volumes. Even as I vent about my anger with the Israelis for their racist practices against Palestinians, sometimes I feel good about it. Deep down in me I am glad that Israel has put these archaic regulations about the need for Palestinians in Jerusalem to prove that Jerusalem is the center of their lives as a condition to hold on to the residency in the city. I would like to think that I would still keep Jerusalem as the center of my life even if these regulations did not exist, but in a strange way, I am thankful for them because they have tested my true allegiance and connection to the city.

When I think of these procedures, however, my blood pressure does rise. I start thinking of the hours wasted at the Ministry of the Interior waiting for a chance to enter this highly secured building in order to renew my documents, issue a birth certificate for my child, or record a marriage, death, or other personal issues that the normal cycle of life often requires.

I remember when my oldest daughter Tamara wanted to marry and her fiancé was from Beit Jala, how we organized two weddings: one in Beit Jala for his family and friends who cannot enter Jerusalem and another in Jerusalem just so that she can record on her documents that she was married in Jerusalem. Not that this helped so much. For years, they had to live a strange life, as her husband often was unable to join her in their Beit Safafa home simply because he did not have a travel permit or if his permit was limited in time and he could not legally sleep in Jerusalem.

Their frustration has led her husband to seek higher education abroad. I remember visiting him in Chicago a few years ago and, as he was driving me from one location to another, it occurred to me that he was never able to drive us when he was in Palestine because he was not even permitted to drive when he had lived in Jerusalem/Bethlehem. My daughter or I who live in Jerusalem had to do all the driving just because he was not given the residency rights of Jerusalemites as a result of this discriminatory Israeli practice.

But, Jerusalem is not only about residency and driving rights. When I wrote my first article in the English weekly *Al Fajr* newspaper back in 1980, I never expected that this

would become my lifetime career. A Jerusalemite writing in English has allowed me to attempt to bridge the informational gap between east and west. I am still awed about how much there is ignorance around the world of Palestinians, especially Palestinian Christians. I am sometimes dumbfounded when I give a lecture at a major American or European University or think tank and someone would ask me a question of when my family converted to Christianity.

My journalism career provided me with a unique opportunity to reflect on many of the aspects of life and living in Jerusalem. In addition to writing and editing *Al Fajr*, I helped start the Jerusalem Film Institute, which allowed me and my colleagues to produce moving pictures from Jerusalem and Palestine as a way to tell our story in the audio-visual mechanism. I remember our Palestinian cinema festivals, our training of many of those who became the founding team of Palestine TV, and our effort to produce the Palestinian version of the famous American children's TV program Sesame Street to Palestinian children. When I produced a 45-minute documentary on Bethlehem, I recall how shallow and almost empty the world media archives were about the history of the town where Jesus was born.

All these efforts were attempts at being the masters of our own narrative after centuries of others trying to explain and often distort our story.

When Mitt Romney — the Republican Party's nominee for President of the United States in the 2012 election — repeated the Zionist lie questioning the origin and authenticity of the

Palestinian people, I dug deep into my family's history and wrote a piece for *The New York Times* detailing the 600-year documented ancestry of my family using the baptismal records at Mar Yaʿoub, the St. James church adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. My father, who was forced like so many after the 1967 to emigrate to the United States in order to allow us to have access to good higher education, also never forgot Jerusalem as he wrote our family history, while living in Philadelphia, in a book titled, *My Family & Palestine — My Beloved Homeland.*

Our Palestinian Christian roots, however, do not stop me for appreciating and supporting the rights of my fellow Palestinian Muslims as we both struggle for Jerusalem's place as the capital of our independent state. The nonviolent protests that occurred in summer 2017 brought back this amazing centuries-long solidarity between the faithful. Attempts by the Israelis to impose restrictions for the entry to Al-Aqsa Mosque produced unprecedented 17 days of protests that finally led to the Israelis dropping their efforts to restrict movement of Palestinians as they tried to worship. During those protest days, a unique comradeship and solidarity were further cemented as the dwindling but active Palestinian Christians of Jerusalem stood by and with their fellow Muslims whether in a visible way or in so many invisible ways. We all knew that the success of the protests will be all our success and the failure of the protests would have as much an effect on Palestinian Christians as it would on Palestinian Muslims.

While the Israeli occupation has had its effects on Jerusalemites, I believe that the spirit of the city is still alive.

Food and culture are an integral part of society. Anyone who lives in Jerusalem is aware of this truth. Every time I travel I am asked to bring with me something from Jerusalem. The *kaek bil simsim* (sesame crusted bread) that is oven cooked in the Musrara neighborhood, just outside Damascus Gate, is one of the favorites of many of my Jordanian friends. No gift is as precious to them as *kaek* from Jerusalem!

Although some items are fit to carry, with you others are best enjoyed as served. I remember shortly after the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993 and some of the PLO leaders were allowed to return to the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, accompanying the beloved Afif Safieh, former Ambassador of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to the United States, Russia, and the Holy See. Afif, one of the most articulate Palestinian Christians from Jerusalem, was followed by a French TV crew as he made his return to his birthright city after years of absence. He decided to go to the Old City and, once inside, he went to his favorite sweet shop. As he ordered a plate of hot knafeh (a sweet made of very fine vermicelli-like pastry), Afif turned to the TV reporter and said, "Before the occupation, during the occupation, and after the occupation, there is nothing like Jaafar's knafeh."

Jerusalem is a fascinating and vibrant city that cannot be controlled, occupied, or restricted. Palestinian Christians, though small in numbers these days, have and will always have a crucial role to play in the future of the city. Occupiers and

invaders have come and gone but Jerusalem and the people living in it have constantly revolted against any one side trying to selfishly control it at the account of all others. The plurality of this mosaic that makes up Jerusalem is what gives it strength and what ultimately defends it against aggressors.

The key to Jerusalem's success and continuous positive glow is the need to preserve this colorful and authentic mix of people from different backgrounds and religions that consider it their capital. The stones of Jerusalem might be an attraction to tourists, but the living stones of its people are the real treasure of the holy city.

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JERUSALEM:
A SAD REALITY BUT THERE IS STILL HOPE

Sami El-Yousef

MR. SAMI EL-YOUSEF is the first lay person to assume the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate. Following higher education in the United States, he returned to his native Jerusalem and worked at Bethlehem University in various positions, ranging from Dean of Faculty of Business Administration and Assistant Cice President for Academic Affairs to Vice President for Finances and Planning. He then joined the CNEWA — Pontifical Mission for Palestine (PMP) office team in Jerusalem in 2009 as the second lay regional director for Palestine and Israel. There, he was involved in securing institutional support to tens of mostly Christian institutions providing quality services to marginalized communities in the sectors of education, health, and social services.

Introduction

The Christian presence in the Holy Land has always been a diverse one as it covers a wide variety of Churches and is older than many neighboring nation states. Jerusalem is the seat of 13 heads of churches, including the Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical. There are also over 125 Catholic religious congregations with presence in the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine). Some are monastic in nature, while others are apostolates of service, especially in the fields of education, healthcare, and social services. For the past few centuries, these communities have operated under many governing

authorities, from the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandatory Administration and the modern states of Jordan, and lastly Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which has some influence on the population.

As a matter of fact, people of my generation have a unique history with each successive generation born under a different governing authority. In my own family, my grandfather was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1890 during the tail end of the Ottoman Empire, my father in 1921 during mandatory Palestine, I was born in 1960 during Jordanian rule, and my four children were all born after 1967 and hold birth certificates issued by the State of Israel! Four generations, born in the same city and yet each generation has a birth certificate issued by a different authority.

Despite this unstable situation, a constant safety net in many people's lives has been the Church and the institutions of the various churches. Further, what has united all of us is our pride in and love for our city. It is indeed a great honor to call the city that has so much history and tradition home. It is overwhelming to think that we walk the same alleyways every day that our Lord Jesus Christ has walked, not to mention other Prophets who have crossed the city over its history. It will be hard to find anywhere else such a place so significant to three religions and two people.

The Sad Reality

Jerusalem today is a divided city consisting of two main parts, East and West. East Jerusalem is home to about 320,000 mostly Palestinian Muslims (including approximately 10,000 Christians) residents, while West Jerusalem is home to about 530,000 mostly Israeli Jewish residents. The two parts are a world apart using any conceivable indicator. While the West side flourishes with government subsidies and first-rate town planning and state of the art infrastructure, the East side is underdeveloped by every possible measure. Following are some concrete statistics about the East side taken from the Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook 2015 published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). It gives the dark statistics in the areas of population, health, education, poverty, labor force and economic activity, and Israeli violations.

The population of the Jerusalem governorate is estimated at 419,108 (including areas inside and outside of the separation wall) with 35.2% below the age of 15 and 6.7% 60 years and above. The percentage of refugees is 25.1% and the average household size is 3.7. As for the education sector, there are 70,367 students studying in 239 schools (115 government; 108 private and 16 UNRWA schools), with 14,159 students in higher education (4 universities and 2 intermediate colleges). It was further highlighted that between 50-60% of the school teachers in Jerusalem come from the West Bank on special permits that must be renewed frequently. As for poverty levels, though the income level is much higher than that on the West

Bank and in Gaza, however, if Israeli standards are applied, then some 78% of the Palestinians are below the Israeli poverty line. In the health sector, there are 8 hospitals in Jerusalem (2 maternity, 1 rehabilitation, 4 general, and 1 specialized), offering an average of 1.6 beds per 1,000 people.

If we examine the economy, the labor force participation rate is 31% of those 15 years and older and the unemployment rate is 19%. If we look more closely on the unemployment rate amongst various groups, we find the following divisions: (34% female vs. 17.1% male); (40.2% among age group 20-24). Jobs are centered in two main sectors with 41.9% in services and 41.4% in wholesale and retail trades. In the area of housing, only 13% of East Jerusalem is zoned for construction, and it is estimated that there is a shortage of 60,000 housing units to meet the Palestinian demand. Finally, if one examines the Israeli violations towards the Palestinian population, 14,481 Jerusalem ID cards were confiscated between 1967 and 2014; 1,724 homes were demolished; and over 281,000 settlers now live in Jerusalem.

The Position of the Governments

Indeed, when one looks at the main indicators above, it is a depressing state of affairs, and the more painful part is the role of two governments, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which have a stake in Jerusalem. As far as Israel is concerned, Jerusalem is its eternal united capital, not to be shared

and thus the vision is to move closer to a Jewish city with minimal presence by other nationalities and religious groups. Accordingly, all policies implemented in the city since taking over the east part of the city, including the Old City, is to incrementally move towards realizing this goal. One should not be surprised, therefore, of the facts on the ground being implemented by Israel since the intentions are declared and abundantly clear.

As far as the Palestinian Authority is concerned, Israel has tied its hands in doing anything in an official or formal way to support East Jerusalem. Any formal PA presence is prohibited and there are consequences to any formal support. However, this has become an excuse for the PA to have a hands-off approach towards Jerusalem and its people, leaving the Jerusalemites and Jerusalem institutions working in various sectors on their own facing the Israeli policies that prohibit any growth or development.

The Challenged Youth

With the Palestinian side taking the position of a bystander and Israel aggressively implementing policies to erase the Palestinian presence, the people of Jerusalem find themselves in an extremely difficult position trying to make the best of a relatively impossible situation. The youth in particular are the group that is paying the heaviest price given that many of them end up leaving school to find employment opportunities

on the West side of the city where for these youngsters, minimum wage in Israel is a lot of money for a 15 or 16 year old. After a few short years of employment, they end up on the unemployment lines having missed out on their education. This naturally leads to social problems, such as drug addiction that has become a common problem especially in the Old City. What we have to face is a new generation that has lost hope in its political leadership on the Palestinian side, and are certainly rejected by Israeli society at large. A generation that cannot be considered educated or trained in any meaningful trade that will make them productive members of society. If we take this one step further and look more closely at the Christian youth in Jerusalem who wake up every day not only to increased violence against many minorities (including Christians) in neighboring countries, but also an increased level of fundamental Islam in Palestinian society. Again, one should not be surprised about new waves of immigration, particularly amongst Christian youth.

The Institutional Responsibility

However, Palestine at large is home to no less than 240 institutions of the various churches working in education, health care, and social services, including schools, hospitals, clinics, old age centers, orphanages, and the like, many of which are in Jerusalem. These institutions assist various segments of society with no distinction to religion, race, color,

or ethnic background and are truly the pride of the Christian community in Jerusalem. It is through these institutions that you see the Christian values at their best being put in practice, and where you see interfaith being practiced rather than being preached.

If one analyzes the scary statistics included here and is concerned about Jerusalem and its future as a city of peace open to all monolithic religions, then steps must be taken to ensure that Christian institutions doing the work of governments should be strengthened and expanded. Both Israel and Palestine will both lose if the indigenous Christian presence in Jerusalem continues to dwindle and is lost. Eventually, it is not the quantity that counts but the quality. The Church of Jerusalem is exceedingly aware of the dire situation of the city and its Christian presence, both individual and institutional. It encourages support to the various institutions working in education, healthcare, and social services, so that we continue to have vibrant institutions of the various churches that not only provide decent employment opportunities, but also services to the needy population at large with the Christian values at heart. Jerusalem will truly be an extremely sad city should the Christian presence disappear.

A Lesson in Interfaith Dialogue

About two years ago, a new surge of violence erupted in Jerusalem characterized by a wave of stabbings. The streets

of Jerusalem were politically charged and tension was terribly high. The city was totally polarized and everyone on edge. You could feel sentiments of hatred and calls for revenge all over the city. I had a group of visitors who financially supported one of the local Christian hospitals and wanted to see how their donation was spent. I gladly accompanied them to the hospital and during the visit, we entered several patient rooms. A particular one was striking as it had three patients: one Jewish, one Christian, and one Muslim. Their families were sitting outside having a coffee and chatting along like they were best friends for life, despite the tension on the streets. To me and my guests, this was a crash course in genuine interfaith dialogue.

The guiding principles of the Christian institutions are the value set that is practiced, consisting of the faith in God, respect, self-control and moderation, honesty and integrity, kindness and compassion, contentment and thoughtfulness, patience and perseverance, peace and humility, and loyalty and commitment. Such values, instilled in the mission and work of the Christian institutions, are more needed today than ever before, values that Christians not only live by and teach to their children, but teach to anyone who becomes affiliated with them as well. What better example of interfaith dialogue that will inspire hope other than what is practiced at this hospital and many other institutions like it serving in Jerusalem.

Can Resilience be Sustained?

This city has seen many crises, struggles, and wars over its history, but it has always risen above it all and continued to be at the heart of hundreds of thousands who call it home. It has a certain charm where one tends to forget and forgive quickly and move on. When I was a mere seven-year-old child, Israel took over the Eastern side of the city. It was a painful start of a long journey of life under occupation. However, we adapted and found ways to cope with the new reality and were not discouraged.

Other wars erupted as well as two intifadas (i.e., Palestinian uprisings against the Israeli occupation) where tension was always high and instead of calling quits on Jerusalem, we always came out stronger and more determined to be more steadfast and stay in our city of birth and defend it. Though the human toll of continued conflict is steep, history has taught us that members of all three religions are determined to continue to call Jerusalem home regardless of what the circumstances are and thus there should be a way forward for the sake of all concerned.

There Is Still Hope

Every now and then, religious feasts of the three monolithic religions coincide. I shall never forget when three years ago, specifically on Good Friday — which coincided with the Jewish

holiday of Pesach and being a Friday, a day of congregational prayers for Muslims — walking through the Via Dolorosa as a Christian recounting the Stations of the Cross, our Jewish neighbors were celebrating their feast and practicing their traditions and our Muslim neighbors were getting ready for noon prayers. Jerusalem had the most accommodating spirit of welcoming believers from all three faith traditions as most people were in a truly spiritual sharing mood. Despite the crowded alleyways, everyone made it to their holy site and practiced their religious traditions freely and with total respect. Why can't every day be like that memorable day for me and why can't we all learn to share this great city so that it truly symbolizes that peace for which we all aspire. Jerusalem is certainly the city of miracles, and my hope is that one day soon, a miracle will occur and give Jerusalem a new re-birth!

22

WHAT JERUSALEM MEANS TO ME: A PALESTINIAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Bernard Sabella

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Jerusalem is the city where I was born and raised, and where my parents experienced becoming refugees in 1948. Growing up in the Old City, I was always fascinated by the earthly scents, scenes, monuments, churches, mosques, and synagogues in the four quarters of the city — Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim. I remember how as boys on Thursday afternoons, when our Collège des Frères at the New Gate was out, we would go on Hoop Rolling through the alleys and narrow streets of the Armenian and Jewish quarters. The feeling was one of freedom and attachment at the same time; we felt free in the cool afternoons of the Jerusalem fall and early winter as we rolled and rolled our hoops. We also met, on our weekly ritual, older people who to us appeared to be as implanted in the city as its churches, mosques, and synagogues as well as in its various histories and narratives.

From our classroom in the Frères School, which overlooked the City Wall dividing the West Jewish part of the city from its East Arab part, we could see Jewish shop owners starting their day as we could also spot once in a while Jordanian and Israeli soldiers guaranteeing the peace of a divided city. My classmates, like myself, came from families, both Christian and Muslim, that have become refugees from Jerusalem's Western part and who had lost home and other cherished memorabilia as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the establishment of Israel, on the one hand, and the Nakba, or catastrophe for Palestinians and their society, on the other.

I do not recall that religion in the Jerusalem I knew as a young boy was ever a divisive factor in forging relations across the different religious groups, in particular among Muslims and Christians. We were blessed with the presence of Armenian, Ethiopian, Greek Orthodox, Latin (Roman Catholics), Melkites (Greek Catholics), Syriacs, Maronites, and Protestant students, beside a good number of Muslims. Almost all of them were indigenous to the city of Jerusalem, thus reflecting the kaleidoscope that was the city in terms of its colorful different groups and ethnicities. I loved growing up in the city, small and yet so inclusive. I remember being invited by Muslim friends to go study with them at their homes; likewise, I invited them to study with me at home. Our studying was done by the kerosene lamp, up till little later in the mid-fifties of the last century, when electricity was introduced in the homes, shops, and souqs of the Old City. I still remember how we maneuvered, before then, the tough

cobblestone streets of the city with lit candles in the evenings on our goings and comings.

Jerusalem was an earthly experience to me. Passing by the Khan Ez Zeit Street, the main commercial thoroughfare in the Old City, was a daily must as our home was close to the street. One cannot be an authentic Jerusalemite without feeling for the narrow alleys, the hard to find eating stops, the special people with their unique talents for coffee making, for roasting of peanuts, and also for their information sharing on developments in the country and elsewhere in the world. Jerusalem of my childhood and youth was a warm environment in which everyone knew everyone else. No child could get lost; as at the moment the word went out that one child was missing, scores of young and old spirited Jerusalemites would search for her/him and sooner than later she/he would be found safe and sound. This was security to us as children. Mother never cautioned us not to talk to strangers as all those living within the confines of the Old City were relatives, neighbors, and or acquaintances.

When school was out at around three thirty in the afternoon it was my routine, together with my cousin Fredo of the same grade cohort, to stroll lazily through the streets of Jerusalem. At Damascus Gate we would usually stop on the right corner of the Gate to buy the freshly roasted peanuts from the squatting older Chadian Fatima, daughter of Mohammed and Zahra, who stayed in Jerusalem on her way back from the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. We never bargained with her; we gave her the 5 Jordanian piasters, equivalent then to $.20 and got a bundle

full of the tastiest peanuts anyone could get. Amir Daana, Abu Salam, who had manned for years the famous newspaper stall up the stairs from Damascus Gate, was our source of information when we were growing up. As young boys we stood by his newspaper stall listening to him discussing news with other grownups. He was the "school on the street" and he remained so until he passed away some years back. God bless his soul. As we went around on the Via Dolorosa, Way of the Cross, on Fridays, we saw the Franciscan monks chanting in Latin the touching hymns venerating Jesus as he carried his cross from one Station to the next.

During Easter Week thousands of visitors and pilgrims arrived from Lebanon, Cyprus, and Egypt to celebrate "Sabt Al Nour — Saturday of Light" with the local Christians. The streets and alleys of the Christian Quarter had stalls with all kinds of Easter-related memorabilia from bundles of colored candles with the image of the Risen Lord in their midst to olive wood and mother of pearl souvenirs from the Holy Land. When the Light did appear at around two in the afternoon of Easter Saturday, commotion and hastily passing the lit candles from one bundle to another made me as a young boy to worry about consequences of the crowd's emotions. But I would never forget 1964 when I was about to graduate from High School when no other but the famous Lebanese singer Fairouz visited the Old City of Jerusalem and walked through the Via Dolorosa. I saw her talking to Palestinian women as she trekked the Stations of the Cross and listened to their stories of refuge and hope for peace and return to their dispossessed

homes. As a result of her visit, Fairouz sang "Ya Quds — Ya Zahrat al Mada'en — Oh Jerusalem — Oh Rose among Cities." This song continues to be a hit among Palestinians and Arabs in general.

During Ramadan, I remember fondly the Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, and others who came on Fridays to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Thousands of them were there making their way to the mosque and as they exited the Damascus Gate they looked for the famed Jerusalem Ka'ek, baked rectangular dough with sesame seeds spread all over it, to take back to their families. Jerusalem as I grew up was a city mixing the local with the regional and international. It symbolized to me openness, trust, hospitality, and, most important, the conviviality of living and being with others different and yet so much alike.

My Jerusalem with its cobblestoned hard to maneuver streets saw me crossing its Christian Quarter four times a day as I went up and down to my Frères School at New Gate. The climb from Khan Ez Zeit, where our Dar or Home was, to the school reminded me that Jerusalem was made up of hills. On the way up I would frequently stop to get needed school stationary at the Shinawi bookstore, by Al Dar Al Kabira, the Big House, where some twenty Christian Palestinian families were housed by the Franciscans after their becoming refugees following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. My own family was such a refugee family and I remember many a morning when my parents, God bless their souls, reminisced over a cup of coffee on their home left behind during the war in Qatamon, a neighborhood

in West Jerusalem with mostly Christian Palestinian families, with the ever present hope of going back one of these days. Further up the street I would smell the freshly roasted coffee of Haj Munib who, with his red fez, stood up as an elder of the city. Every morning I bade him a good one as the smell from his coffee beans woke me up. Not far from Haj Munib, were the Kourd and Khader bakeries where we bought our daily bread. Like Haj Munib, the bakeries' owners were Muslims. On Easter, Christmas, and other holidays the bakeries made special bread to suit the occasion. I never forget the twisted glazed bread with a hard boiled colored egg in its midst that the bakeries offered to help us celebrate Easter. Nor do I forget the Christian boys of the Quarter, "the small gangsters" as I would refer to them, as they were competing on a corner of a street on whose Easter egg was harder to break. The one who broke more of the eggs won them all.

Jerusalem of my childhood also saw the fire that broke out in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1949. I was five years old then and I still remember how I and my siblings found our way from our nearby Dar in Khan Ez Zeit Street to the environs of the church where Jordanian Arab Legion soldiers and firefighters were helping to extinguish the fire. We stood by as we saw the soldiers and firefighters carrying what appeared to me as injured people and burnt out items. King Abdullah, who founded modern Jordan, was himself at the scene according to sources that I later consulted as I wanted to replace my childhood memories with the factual accounts of

grownups. The King was instrumental in seeing to it that the burnt roof of the church was speedily renewed.

I will never forget the one Friday in July 1951 as Mother was preparing our lunch, with hummus and falafel from the famed Abu Shukri restaurant at the Christian Quarter. As she was serving us, we heard shots coming from the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We were perplexed; the story was that King Abdullah was just shot as he was entering the mosque. Jerusalem was put under curfew and soldiers appeared everywhere within the city. I remember that we stayed under curfew for some days and we whiled away the time in all kinds of childhood activities. By our home was a small coffee shop where usually sheep herd traders sat negotiating over deals and exchanged money in the process. To me, they appeared tribal sheikhs. I learned in later years that it was in this same small coffee shop that the conspirators for the assassination of the King conferred and finalized their plan.

My love for Jerusalem stemmed not simply from my experience in its streets, at my school, and in the parish church, but most importantly from my Mother's love for the city. I will never forget how Mother would sit in the early hours of the morning or early in the afternoon, with a cup of coffee and a cigarette, contemplating the view from the window of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Mount of Olives. I would listen to the call for prayers from the Muezzin while the bells of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ring at the same time. Mother regularly told us never to leave the city if another war broke out; that would result in perpetual exile. The family heeded her

advice when the June 1967 War took place. They stayed put and huddled in one of the neighbors' homes in the lower part of the Dar. At that time, I was studying in the United States and I followed the war news from Philadelphia where I saw jubilation among some Americans for the bashing of those "A-rabs" and saw Orthodox Jewish lads with their black suits soliciting funds in support of Israel. When the dust of war settled down, East Jerusalem, which between 1948 and 1967 was under Jordan's jurisdiction, was occupied by Israel, a fact which forever changed the city as I knew it throughout my childhood and youth.

Jerusalem remains a place of roots for me. On the recent All Souls' Day, I visited the Roman Catholic Cemetery on Mount Zion where my Parents, Marguerite and Zakharia, are laid to rest with aunts, uncle, and other family members. As I and Mary, my wife, honored them with flowers and prayers, we passed by the gravestone of Oscar Schindler, one of those heroes who saved hundreds of Jews from the predicament of a concentration camp, and we paid our respects as well. Jerusalem "underground" inadvertently reminds one of the Jerusalem "above ground" and its complex and conflicting realities. Yet, in my vision for the future of Jerusalem, I cannot escape including these realities, all of them in spite of the pain and the calls to exclusivity heard from this or that side.

Jerusalem is destined to be for all. This is beautifully laid out in "The Memorandum of Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs and of the Heads of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem"

of November 14, 1994 (Appendix I). In its concluding remark, it states:

> "Jerusalem is a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of fraternity and peace for humankind, in particular for the children of Abraham: Jews, Christians, and Muslims. We call upon all parties concerned to comprehend and accept the nature and deep significance of Jerusalem, the City of God. None can appropriate it in exclusivist ways. We invite each party to go beyond all exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, to consider the religious and national aspirations of others, in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a holy place of reconciliation for humankind."

23

LIVING MY FAITH IN JERUSALEM

Saliba Sarsar

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Jerusalem is my city. She was, is, and will always be the primary focus of my religious and spiritual life. She is where I was born and raised, where I took my initial breaths and saw first light. She is where I learned the alphabet and discovered right from wrong. The seeds of my own identity took root in Jerusalem. My earliest words and actions engendered meaning and significance that would later define who I am, what I believe, and what impact I may have on others.

Jerusalem is our city, our home. We sense stronger and more numerous connections than anywhere else. We experience the Creator in our midst, and the Earth nearer to the Heavens. On a clear summer night, we can touch the moon, even capture

the stars! Without Jerusalem, we feel stranded. Without our collective care, she feels empty and purposeless.

Over the centuries, large segments of humanity have turned to Jerusalem when pondering the meaning of life, death, and the hereafter, as found to varying degrees in the three monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. For billions of believers and non-believers today, Jerusalem evokes old and new reflections. She gives fertile ground to recollections both pleasant and unpleasant, including moments of peace but long swathes of time scorched by fire and stained with blood.

While I am immersed in Jerusalem's history past and present, the personal and religious dimensions hold the most value for me. These often intersect, with their interconnections enhancing my own spiritual journey towards the light, the light of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

My life is deeply anchored in Jerusalem. My earliest recollections are of my parents. I am told that my Russian father Ivan, who was renamed George, and my Greek Palestinian mother Evelyn, both Orthodox Christians, were married at the Swedish School where they lived for a time during the 1930s and early 1940s. Officiating at the holy matrimony at the Lutheran institution was the parish priest of the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox community, somewhat unusual in those days but it did happen.

I was born at Augusta Victoria Hospital, another Lutheran institution, atop the Mount of Olives, close to where Jesus Christ ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-12). Coming into the world around the annual celebration of the Exaltation of the

Holy Cross, I was named Saliba, derivative of the Arabic word *salib*, meaning cross or crucifix. Tradition has it that St. Helena, Emperor Constantine the Great's mother, discovered the True Cross in 326 AD during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[53] Ever since birth, I have worn the Cross — my compass, my guide.

Since childhood, I have walked through Jerusalem's alleyways, marketplaces, and holy sites, always feeling the awesome energy emanating from all around me. Along with my siblings — three sisters and four brothers — I attended Roman Catholic schools: Collège des Frères at the Old City's New Gate and Collège de Terre-Sainte (Soeurs de St. Joseph) near the Old City's Jaffa Gate. Both provided a holistic, quality education anchored in Christian and human values, critical thinking, and languages. While we children, with other students and teachers, often attended Roman Catholic mass — with at least two of us boys even serving as altar boys — we also felt at home praying during Divine Liturgy at Mar Yacoub (Saint James) — the parish church of the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox community, adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In so doing, we were comfortable in both Christian denominations. We regularly crossed ourselves whenever we passed or entered a church regardless of its sect, and that's dozens and dozens of churches.

But in those days and to some extent still today, the denominational lines were for the most part drawn in religious cement. My father-in-law, a Palestinian Greek Orthodox Christian, and my mother-in-law, a Palestinian Roman Catholic, were married at the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with the Holy See. Their individual churches would not marry them unless their spouse-to-be was or became of the same denomination.

Crossing completely from one denomination to the other was and remains difficult. My second oldest sister Anastas, who, like the rest of the family, was raised Orthodox Christian, decided to become Roman Catholic, having been influenced by the Roman Catholic nuns, Soeurs de St. Joseph. Anastas' decision to join the order of Saint Joseph of the Apparition fell hard on some members of the family. The expectation was that she would marry, as was customary and as several young men showed interest. When the marriage angle did not succeed, my mother suggested that she becomes an Orthodox Christian nun instead. Anastas' mind was already set, and the ordination took place. She ended with dedicating her life to caring for the sick at the Saint Joseph Hospital in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem. When she passed away, the Greek Orthodox Church refused to allow her burial in the family plot at the Greek Orthodox Cemetery on Mount Zion. She was buried a short distance away at the Roman Catholic cemetery.

As a teenager, I got to know the countless churches — Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant — that make Jerusalem their home. On weekends or during vacation, I sometimes used to go to the Old City and act as a guide for Western tourists, and I would be chased by the professional guides because I was taking their jobs away! The two churches that deepened and still deepen my religious imagination the most are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, known to

Eastern Orthodox Christians as Anastasis or the Church of the Resurrection, and the Church of Sitna Mariam.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is located on the site that encompasses Golgotha, or Calvary, where Jesus was crucified, and the tomb where he was buried. The church and its surroundings contain no less than two dozen chapels, with the main custodians being the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Roman Catholic. The Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Syriac Orthodox received some rights and responsibilities in the 19th century, and have religious sites inside and adjacent to the church.

As in the crossing of interdenominational boundaries, intra-faith rivalries happen occasionally, as demonstrated by disputes among Greek Orthodox, Latin or Roman Catholic, and Armenian clergy over rights within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — which over the years have prevented badly needed church renovations. The most recent renovation of Jesus' tomb, or the Holy Edicule, began in June 2016 and was completed in March 2017; the last was undertaken in 1809-1810 after a major fire. It is interesting to note that the custody of the door and the key for the church has been entrusted to two Muslim Palestinian families — Judeh and Nusseibeh — for over 770 years.[54]

The Church of Sitna Mariam holds a special meaning as it is the place where my orphaned father first met the woman who later became his adoptive mother. I have often frequented this church, which is located deep beneath Gethsemane. Entering its doorway, it takes a few seconds for one's eyes to adjust to

the darkness inside. The transition is eased by the dozens of lit candles indicating the way downward. The steps are slippery. The millions of candles that were lit over the years — including those of my relatives — have left their traces. Tapestries, lamps, and candles adorn the entire burial chamber. One of the several icons shows Mary's body surrounded by the apostles, while in the background Christ holds in his hands the soul of Mary about to be taken to heaven. Like the age-old belief that Mary's body did not remain in the grave, my orphaned father found hope. Darkness and death were transformed into light and life.

Christmas was festive in Jerusalem. To celebrate Jesus' birth, we usually did not travel to Bethlehem to pray at the Church of the Nativity as the only road prior to June 1967 was long, circuitous, and dangerous, but we did so in Jerusalem. In preparation, we also visited the Istanboulis, a Palestinian Muslim family, whose property overlooked the Valley of Hinnom, Gehenna, or Wadi Rababeh (Valley of the Lute), as Palestinians call it. With a saw in hand, we would cut a healthy and well-shaped branch of a pine tree from their expansive backyard and then cart it off up the hill and through our all-Muslim Al-Thawri neighborhood for decoration. Each ornament jogged a memory or told a story, as many of the ornaments were passed down from grandparents. We always waited for Santa Claus and his helpers, or more accurately for our maternal Greek grandfather and his family from West Jerusalem, to show up. Like the few Palestinian Arab Christians living in Israel, they were able to travel only once

a year during Christmas through Mandelbaum Gate — the single border crossing between Israeli West Jerusalem and Jordanian East Jerusalem between 1949 and 1967 — so as to make pilgrimage to Bethlehem, and stay for a couple of days."

Easter week was equally special, as it embodies not only Jesus' crucifixion and burial, but also His resurrection. It always brought forth a seesaw of emotions, ranging from the somberness of pain and death to the joyfulness of healing, empowerment, and a new life. Past the fasting and prayers, a favorite kind of sweets we looked forward to making and eating around Easter is *kaek and maʿmoul* (stuffed cookies with dates and nuts, respectively). The round *kaek* resembles the crown of thorns, the closed *maʿmoul* symbolizes the tomb, and the ingredients inside the *kaek and maʿmoul* and their sweet taste refer to resurrection.

Even though Christianity enfolded me in her arms, from early age I became fully aware of "the other" in my daily life, mainly the Arab Palestinian Muslim and the Israeli Jew. My neighbors, several of my classmates and friends, and others I came in contact with outside my family and my church prior to and after the June 1967 War were Arab Palestinian Muslims. Culture, language, and national aspirations connected us to each other. Whatever transpired around us, both good and bad, impacted us in similar ways regardless of our religious affiliation. After the June 1967 War, I was introduced to Israeli Jewish culture and developed close friendships with Israelis as well.

In time, I began to acknowledge, appreciate, and understand the sacredness of Jerusalem to the other two Abrahamic faiths of Islam and Judaism and the importance of Jerusalem to both the Palestinian and Israeli national communities. Exclusive religious and national views soon gave way to inclusive values that embraced both the different and the similar in "the other."

As a Christian, I can no longer think of Jerusalem without its Muslim and Jewish believers. The wall, the tomb, the rock — all three are symbols of faith, faith in the one God. As a Christian, I can no longer think of Jerusalem without its Palestinian people, Christian and Muslim, and without its Israeli people. Both national communities have rights and claims that must be addressed.

Jerusalem is my home; she is our home. As a Christian, I feel at home in Jerusalem only when I know that my neighbors, my friends — broadly defined — are also feeling at home, unhindered by discriminatory treatment, despair, fear, or humiliation.

A lawyer asked Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

For those who advocate hating of "the other," as in enemies, Jesus offers an alternative:

> "You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous.... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:43-48).

A similar sentiment was echoed by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In one of his favorite sermons, "Loving Your Enemies," he elaborated on Jesus' exhortation to love one's enemies. He believed this command to be "an absolute necessity for our survival"[56] and that "love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."[57] Otherwise,

> "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction."[58]

Jesus' path for us is Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows, the Way of the Cross. Living our Christian faith in Jerusalem and beyond necessitates building "an inclusive community, even including so-called enemies, by using the power of nonviolent, loving, willing-to-risk-suffering action."[59]

Jews, Christians, and Muslims; Palestinians and Israelis, will be better off if the invitation to nonviolence and peace is taken seriously.

APPENDIX I

THE "MEMORANDUM OF THEIR BEATITUDES THE PATRIARCHS AND OF THE HEADS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN JERUSALEM"

November 14, 1994

The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians

On Monday, 14 November 1994, the heads of the Christian communities in Jerusalem met in solemn conclave to discuss the status of the Holy City and the situation of the Christians there, at the conclusion of which, they issued the following declaration:

Jerusalem, Holy City

Jerusalem is a city holy for the people of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Its unique nature of sanctity endows it with a special vocation: calling for reconciliation and harmony among people, whether citizens, pilgrims or visitors. And because of its symbolic and emotive

value. Jerusalem has been a rallying cry for different revived nationalistic and fundamentalist stirrings in the region and elsewhere. And, unfortunately, the city has become a source of conflict and disharmony. It is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab disputes. While the mystical call of the city attracts believers, its present unenviable situation scandalizes many.

The Peace Process

The current Arab-Israeli peace process is on its way toward resolution of the Middle East conflict. Some new facts have already been established, some concrete signs posted. But in the process Jerusalem has again been sidestepped, because its status, and especially sovereignty over the city, are the most difficult questions to resolve in future negotiations. Nevertheless, one must already begin to reflect on the questions and do whatever is necessary to be able to approach them in the most favorable conditions when the moment arrives.

Present Positions

When the different sides involved now speak of Jerusalem, they often assume exclusivist positions. Their claims are very divergent, indeed conflicting. The Israeli position is that Jerusalem should remain the unified and eternal capital of the

State of Israel under the absolute sovereignty of Israel alone. The Palestinians, on the other hand, insist Jerusalem should become the capital of a future State of Palestine; although they do not lay claim to the entire modern city, but envisage only the eastern, Arab part.

Lessons of History

Jerusalem has had a long, eventful history. It has known numerous wars and conquests and has been destroyed time and again, only to be reborn anew and rise from its ashes like the mythical phoenix. Religious motivation has always gone hand in hand with political and cultural aspirations and has often played a preponderant role. This motivation has often led to exclusivism or at least to the supremacy of one people over the others. But every exclusivity or every human supremacy is against the prophetic character of Jerusalem. Its universal vocation and appeal is to be a city of peace and harmony among all who dwell therein.

Jerusalem, like the entire Holy Land, has witnessed throughout its history the successive advent of numerous new peoples: people from the desert, the sea, the north and the east. Most often the newcomers were gradually integrated into the local population. This was a rather constant characteristic. But when the newcomers tried to claim exclusive possession of the city and the land, or refused to integrate themselves, the others rejected them.

Indeed, the experience of history teaches us that in order for Jerusalem to be a city of peace, no longer lusted after from the outside and thus a bone of contention between warring sides, it cannot belong exclusively to one people or to one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all. Those who govern the city should make it "the capital of humankind." This universal vision of Jerusalem would help those who exercise power there to open it to those who are also fondly attached to it and to accept sharing it with them.

The Christian Vision of Jerusalem

Through the prayerful reading of the Bible, Christians recognize in faith that the long history of the people of God, with Jerusalem as its center, is the history of salvation that fulfills God's design in and through Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

The one God has chosen Jerusalem to be the place where his name alone will dwell in the midst of his people so that they may offer to him acceptable worship. The prophets looked up to Jerusalem, especially after the purification of the exile: Jerusalem will be called the "city of justice, faithful city," (Isaiah 1:26-27) where the Lord dwells in holiness as in Sinai (Psalms 68:18). The Lord will place the city in the middle of the nations (Ezekiel 5:5), where the Second Temple will become a house of prayer for all people (Isaiah 2:2, 56:6-7). Jerusalem, aglow with the presence of God (Isaiah 60:1),

ought to be a city whose gates are always open (Isaiah 11) with Peace as magistrate and Justice as government (Isaiah 17).

In the vision of their faith, Christians believe the Jerusalem of the prophets to be the foreseen place of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, Jerusalem rejects the Sent-One, the Savior; and he weeps over it because this city of the prophets, which is also the city of the essential salvific events — the death and resurrection of Jesus — has completely lost sight of the path to peace (Luke 19:42).

In the Acts of the Apostles, Jerusalem is the place of the gift of the Spirit, of the birth of the Church (Acts 2), the community of the disciples of Jesus who are to be his witness, not only in Jerusalem, but even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In Jerusalem, the first Christian community incarnated the ecclesiastical ideal, and thus it remains a continuing reference point.

The Book of Revelation proclaims the anticipation of the new, heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12. 21:2. Cf Galalatians 4:26. Hebrews 12:22). This holy city is the image of the new creation and the aspirations of all peoples, where God will wipe away all tears, and "there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The earthly Jerusalem, in the Christian tradition, prefigures the heavenly Jerusalem as "the vision of peace." In the liturgy, the Church itself receives the name of Jerusalem and relives all of that city's anguish, joy and hope. Furthermore, during the first centuries the liturgy of Jerusalem became the foundation

of all liturgies everywhere, and later deeply influenced the development of diverse liturgical traditions, because of the many pilgrimages to Jerusalem and of the symbolic meaning of the Holy City.

The pilgrimages slowly led to an understanding of the need to unify the sanctification of space through celebrations at the Holy Places with the sanctification in time through the calendared celebrations of the holy events of salvation (Egeria, Cyril of Jerusalem). Jerusalem soon occupied a unique place in the heart of Christianity everywhere. A theology and spirituality of pilgrimage developed. It was an ascetic time of biblical refreshment at the sources, a time of testing during which Christians recalled that they were "strangers and aliens on earth," (Hebrews 11:13) and that their personal and community vocation always and everywhere was to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

The Continuing Presence of a Christian Community

For Christianity, Jerusalem is the place of roots, ever-living and nourishing. In Jerusalem is born every Christian. To be in Jerusalem is for every Christian to be at home.

For almost two thousand years, through so many hardships and the succession of so many powers, the local Church with its faithful has always been actively present in Jerusalem. Across the centuries, the local Church has witnessed the life and work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the

same Holy Places and its faithful have been receiving other brothers and sisters in the faith, as pilgrims, resident or in transit, inviting them to be re-immersed into the refreshing, ever-living ecclesiastical sources. That continuing presence of a living Christian community is inseparable from the historical sites. Through the "living stones," the holy archaeological sites take on "life."

The City as Holy and As Other Cities

Thus the significance of Jerusalem for Christians has two inseparable fundamental dimensions:

1. A Holy City with Holy Places most precious to Christians because of their link with the history of salvation fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ.
2. A city with a community of Christians that has been living there continually since its origins.

Thus for the local Christians, as well as for local Jews and Muslims, Jerusalem is not only a holy city, but also their native city where they live, whence their right to continue to live there freely, with all the rights which obtain from that.

Legitimate Demands of Christians for Jerusalem

In so far as Jerusalem is the quintessential Holy City, it above all ought to enjoy full freedom of access to its Holy Places and freedom of worship. Those rights of property ownership, custody and worship that the different churches have acquired throughout history should continue to be retained by the same communities. These rights that are already protected in the Status Quo of the Holy Places according to the historical "firmans" [decrees of the Ottoman sultans] and other documents, should continue to be recognized and respected.

The Christians of the entire world, Western or Eastern, should have the right to come on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They ought to be able to find there all that is necessary to carry out their pilgrimage in the spirit of their authentic tradition: freedom to visit and to move around, to pray at holy sites, to embark into spiritual attendance and respectful practice of their faith, to enjoy the possibility of a prolonged stay and the benefits of hospitality and dignified lodgings.

The local Christian communities should enjoy all those rights to enable them to continue their active presence in freedom and to fulfill their responsibilities toward their own local members and to Christian pilgrims throughout the world.

Local Christians, not only in their capacity as Christians, but like all other citizens, religious or not, should enjoy the same fundamental rights for all: social, cultural, political and national. Among these rights are:

1. The human right of freedom of worship and of conscience, for both individuals and religious communities.
2. Civil and historical rights that allow them to carry out their religious, educational, medical and other duties of charity.
3. The right to have their own institutions, such as hospices for pilgrims, institutes for the study of the Bible and the traditions, centers for encounters with believers of other religions, monasteries, churches, cemeteries and so forth, and the right to have their own personnel man and run these institutions.

In claiming these rights for themselves, Christians recognize and respect similar and parallel rights of Jewish and Muslim believers and their communities. Christians declare themselves disposed to search with Jews and Muslims for a mutually respective application of these rights and for a harmonious coexistence, in the perspective of the universal spiritual vocation of Jerusalem.

Special Statute for Jerusalem

All this presupposes a special judicial and political statute for Jerusalem that reflects the universal importance and significance of the city.

1. In order to satisfy the national aspirations of all its inhabitants and in order that Jews, Christians and Muslims can be "at home" in Jerusalem and at peace with one another, representatives from the

three monotheistic religions, in addition to local political powers, ought to be associated in the elaboration and application of such a special statute.

2. Because of the universal significance of Jerusalem, the international community ought to be engaged in the stability and permanence of this statute. Jerusalem is too precious to be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities, whoever they may be. Experience shows that an international guarantee is necessary.

Experience shows that such local authorities, for political reasons or the claims of security, sometimes are required to violate the rights of free access to the Holy Places. Therefore it is necessary to accord Jerusalem a special statute that will free Jerusalem from laws imposed as a result of hostilities or wars, but to be an open city that transcends local, regional or world political troubles. This statute, established in common by local political and religious authorities, should also be guaranteed by the international community.

Conclusion

Jerusalem is a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of fraternity and peace for humankind, in particular the children of Abraham: Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

We call upon all parties concerned to comprehend and accept the nature and deep significance of Jerusalem, City of God. None can appropriate it in exclusivist ways. We invite

each party to go beyond all exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, to consider the religious and national aspirations of others in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a holy place of reconciliation for humankind.

The declaration was signed by the following:

+ Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem
+ Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
+ Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem
+ Custos of the Holy Land
+ Coptic Archbishop of Jerusalem
+ Syriac Archbishop of Jerusalem
+ Ethiopian Archbishop of Jerusalem
+ Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and Presiding Bishop of the Anglican Church
+ Greek-Catholic Patriarchal Vicar
+ Lutheran Bishop of Jerusalem
+ Maronite Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem
+ Catholic Syriac Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem

APPENDIX II

STATUS OF JERUSALEM
A STATEMENT BY PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

September 29, 2006

Once more, we have experienced another period of deadly violence in the war in South Lebanon. We still face more death and demolition in Gaza, and more insecurity in the Israeli society. Therefore, we say it is high time to start a serious effort from all parts for a total definitive and just peace. Moreover, we believe that peace must begin in this Holy City of Jerusalem. Therefore, we present the following statement hoping it will bring a modest contribution to the birth of peace in our Land. In 1994, we, the patriarchs and heads of the local Christian Churches in Jerusalem, published a memorandum entitled "The Meaning of Jerusalem for Christians" that insisted on the Christian character of Jerusalem, and on the importance of the Christian presence in her.

It also discussed the special political status that must be accorded to the city because of her sacred character. Since that time, we have witnessed the increasing tendency of

the political authorities to unilaterally decide the fate of the city and define her status. The access of our faithful and our personnel to Jerusalem is ever-more difficult.

With the construction of the wall many of our faithful are excluded from the precincts of the holy city, and according to plans published in the local press, many more will also be excluded in the future. Surrounded by walls, Jerusalem is no longer at the center and is no longer the heart of life as she should be.

We consider it part of our duty to draw the attention of the local authorities, as well as the international community and the world Churches, to this very grave situation and call for a concerted effort to search for a common vision on the status of this holy city based on international resolutions and having regard to the rights of two peoples in her and the three faith communities.

In this city, in which God chose to speak to humanity and to reconcile peoples with himself and among themselves, we raise our voices to say that the paths, followed up till now, have not brought about the pacification of the city and have not reassured normal life for her inhabitants. Therefore they must be changed. The political leaders must search for a new vision as well as for new means.

In God's own design, two peoples and three religions have been living together in this city. Our vision is that they should continue to live together in harmony, respect, mutual acceptance and cooperation.

1. Jerusalem, Holy City and City of Daily Life for Two Peoples and Three Religions

Jerusalem, heritage of humanity and holy city, is also the city of daily life for her inhabitants, both Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslim, and for all who are linked to them by family ties as well as for those for whom Jerusalem is the location of their prayer, of their schools, hospitals and work places.

Not only historical memories and sacred places of pilgrimage, but also living communities of believers, Jews, Christians and Muslims, make the city of Jerusalem beloved and unique for each one of the three monotheistic faiths. Holy places and living human communities are inseparable.

In addition, both the sacred character of the holy city and the needs of her inhabitants have attracted and continue to attract numerous religious institutions. These have been recognized by the successive authorities throughout the centuries and have acquired certain rights that allow them to fulfill their obligations toward the holy city and her inhabitants.

Consequently, the fundamental rights pertaining to both individuals and institutions must be respected. For individuals, these are basic rights that permit them to exercise their religious, political and social duties and to meet their religious, educational, cultural and medical needs.

For communities, this is the right to possess, to freely administer the works necessary for their ministry and their

overall human development — churches, monasteries, schools, hospitals, social institutions, theological and biblical institutes, accommodation for pilgrims, etc. It also includes the right to bring in the personnel and avail of the means needed for the proper functioning of the institutions.

2. Requirements for a Just and Durable Solution for the Jerusalem Question

The future of the city must be decided by common agreement, through collaboration and consultation and not imposed by power and force. Unilateral decisions or imposed solutions will continue to be very detrimental to peace and security.

Different solutions are possible. The city of Jerusalem might remain united but sovereignty in this case must be shared, exercised according to a principle of equality by both Israelis and Palestinians. However, the city might also be divided if this be the desire of the two peoples who live here, with two distinct sovereignties, the aim of which would be to reach a true unity of hearts in the two parts of the city.

The wall, which tears apart the city at more than one point and which excludes a great number of her inhabitants must give way to an education that will strengthen mutual trust and acceptance.

Face to face with the inability of the parties involved to find a just and durable solution up until the present time, the assistance of the international community is a necessity. In the

future too, this aid needs to continue in the form of guarantees that will ensure the stability of the agreements reached by the two sides.

We recommend to create as soon as possible an ad hoc committee to reflect on the future of the city. In this committee the local Churches of Jerusalem must be a part.

3. Special Status — Open City

Jerusalem, holy city, heritage of humanity, city of two peoples and three religions, has a unique character that distinguishes her from all the other cities of the world; a character which surpasses any local political sovereignty.

"Jerusalem is too precious to be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities" (cf. Memorandum, 1994).

Jerusalem's two peoples are the guardians of her sanctity and carry a double responsibility: to organize their lives in the city and to welcome all the "pilgrims" who come from around the world. The needed international collaboration is not meant to replace the role and the sovereignty of her two peoples. It is rather needed in order to help both peoples to reach the definition and the stability of the special status of the city.

That is why, concretely, and from the political, economic and social point of view, her two peoples must bestow on Jerusalem a special status that corresponds to her double

character, holy and universal, and ordinary and local, where daily life unfolds.

Once this status has been found and defined, the international community is required to confirm it with international guaranties that will assure continuing peace and respect for all.

The components of this special status must include the following elements:

"The human right of freedom of worship and of conscience for all, both as individuals and as religious communities" (cf. Memorandum, 1994).

Equality of all her inhabitants before the law, in coordination with the international resolutions.

Free access to Jerusalem for all, citizens, residents or pilgrims, at all times, whether in peace or in war. Therefore Jerusalem should be an open city.

The "rights of property ownership, custody and worship which the different Churches have acquired throughout history should continue to be retained by the same communities. These rights which are already protected in the Status Quo of the Holy Places according to historical "firmans" and other documents, should continue to be recognized and respected" (cf. Memorandum, 1994).

The various Christian holy places in the city, wherever they are, must remain united in geography, whatever the solution envisaged.

Conclusion

For Jews, Christians and Muslims, Jerusalem is a high place of revelation and of God's encounter with humanity. That is why we cannot remain indifferent to her fate nor remain silent in the face of her sufferings.

"For Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her vindication shines out like the dawn and her salvation like a burning torch" (Isaiah 62:1).

We are launching this solemn appeal to all the religious leaders in the Holy Land to collaborate together in order to reach a common vision of the city that might unite the hearts of all believers. We call on our political authorities to seek out the common points of agreement and, in cooperation with the religious authorities, to find a solution which corresponds to the city's sacred character.

We hope that our appeal might be heard and that the political leaders, respecting the nature of this holy city, might show themselves capable of reaching a final and definitive agreement that might make of Jerusalem a true sign of the presence of God and of his peace among all.

+ Patriarch Theophilos III: Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Patriarch Michel Sabbah: Latin Patriarchate.
+ Patriarch Torkom II: Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate.
+ Father Pier Battista Pizziballa, Custos of the Holy Land
+ Anba Abraham: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Swerios Malki Mourad: Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate.
+ Abune Grima: Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Paul Nabil Sayyah: Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate.
+ Bishop Riah Abu Al-Assal: Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East
+ Bishop Mounib Younan: Lutheran Evangelical Church
+ Pierre Malki: Exarch for the Syrian Catholics — Jerusalem
+ George Bakar: Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
+ Father Rafael Minassian: Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

APPENDIX III

LETTER FROM THREE PATRIARCHS TO THREE POLITICAL LEADERS WHO MET IN CAMP DAVID TO DECIDE THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM

HE Mr Bill Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States

HE Mr Ehud Barak
Prime Minister of Israel

HE Mr Yasser Arafat
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Jerusalem, July 17, 2000

Your Excellencies:

Greetings to you from Jerusalem as you strive to bring peace to our beloved Holy Land. We continue to pray that you will succeed in your prophetic mission of ending the long and painful conflict in our region. Yours is a difficult and challenging task, and we remain confident that you will

conclude it in a manner that lifts up the hopes of the two peoples and three religions of this land — Palestinians and Israelis; Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

Your Excellencies, it is an established fact that our Patriarchates and Churches enjoy a long history and a rich heritage in this biblical land. Local Christians have been represented by their ecclesial institutions here for centuries, and have enjoyed special privileges that were codified by the Status Quo provisions as much as by custom and tradition over many centuries. As you deliberate over those issues that impact the Holy City of Jerusalem, we trust you will not forget or overlook our age-long presence here. The rich tapestry of this land is made even richer and more precious with this continuous Christian life, witness and presence alongside the two other Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Islam.

Conscious of this qualitative and quantitative reality as represented by all our Christian communities, we appeal to you as foremost political leaders and negotiators to ensure that the Christian communities within the walls of the Old City are not separated from each other. We regard the Christian and Armenian Quarters of the Old City as inseparable and contiguous entities that are firmly united by the same faith. Furthermore, we trust that your negotiations will also secure that any arrangement for Jerusalem will ensure that the fundamental freedoms of worship and access by all Christians to their holy sanctuaries and to their headquarters within the Old City are not impeded in any way

whatsoever. Such freedoms underline the special nature of this city and enhance its right to development.

We suggest that one possible way of ensuring this peaceful unity and cohesive prosperity of the Christian presence in the Holy City of Jerusalem — with its varied mosaic of worshippers, churches and sanctuaries — is through a system of international guarantees that will ensure to the three religious communities a quality of right of access to their respective holy places, of profession of faith and of development.

Your Excellencies, as Heads of our Churches and being fully conscious of the heavy duty we carry with us, we also suggest that it might well be advisable to have representatives from our three Patriarchates and the Custody of the Holy Land at the Camp David summit meeting as much as at any future fora in order to provide continuity and consultation on our future and on our rights so that our one collective presence here — with its history of rights and expectations — is maintained unequivocally and safeguarded fully.

In conclusion, and as we re-iterate our prayers for the success of your summit meeting, we also recall that Jerusalem — al-Quds the Sacred and Yerushalaim the Peaceful — will remain vital to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. And in so being, it will also reflect a sense of full equality for all the three religions witnessing in this land.

+ Diodoros I Greek Orthodox *Patriarch*
+ Michel Sabbah Latin Patriarch
+ Torkom II Armenian Orthodox *Patriarch*

APPENDIX IV

THE CHURCHES' MESSAGE FROM JERUSALEM TO ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS ON THEIR 60 YEARS

May 2008

When one's 60 years of hardship and displacement is celebrated by another nation as its independence day and when one's nation suffering is the other nation's security requirement, when both nations live in the Holy Land that have longed for peace, We the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem say:

Negotiate just peace to enjoy independence and freedom.

From our Churches, communities, and organizations in Palestine and Israel, from Jerusalem, the disconnected center of life, we, Heads of Churches, join our people in calling for an end of occupation and the birth of just peace and vision for a normal future within a negotiation process dealing with final status settlement where both Israelis and Palestinians live side by side on this Land with dignity, reconciliation, and prosperity. Where children go to school, the faithful to their

Synagogues, Mosques and Churches, and people to their work without borders and checkpoints, secured without humiliation and hatred.

Yes, this is the time where Jerusalem becomes shared, where refugees have their rights reserved. Yes it is the time to reconcile and make justice; it is time to celebrate the Glory of our one God through respecting the human dignity of His creation.

Lord, help us get out of the tunnel to see your light shed on the Land of Palestine and Israel, your favorite, your place of birth, and resurrection.

A peace process that started in 1995 has led to the recognition of both peoples, but ending the illegal occupation of the 1967 areas and a process to exchange land for peace will ensure recognition of the independent states of Palestine and Israel by the whole World and 53 Arab and Islamic countries based on the Arab Initiative for Peace. With the momentum supported by the United States administration and the Quartet the final status frame should be agreed upon recognizing Jerusalem as a shared and open City of Peace for all peoples and settling the final issues in a just manner for both peoples.

We greet Israel on its 60 years of Independence and we mourn with the Palestinians the Nakba day, and we pray and hope that both Palestinians and Israelis will find the capacity, through positive and right negotiations, of transforming the Nakba day in a day of Independence celebrated by all.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)

Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

APPENDIX V

PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

President Donald J. Trump

President of the United States of America

Jerusalem on December 6, 2017

Dear Mr. President,

We are fully aware and appreciative of how you are dedicating special attention to the status of Jerusalem in these days. We are following with attentiveness and we see that it is our duty to address this letter to Your Excellency. On July 17, 2000, we addressed a similar letter to the leaders who met in Camp David to decide the status of Jerusalem.

They kindly took our letter into consideration. Today, Mr. President, we are confident that you too will take our viewpoint into consideration on the very important status of Jerusalem. Our land is called to be a land of peace. Jerusalem, the city of God, is a city of peace for us and for the world.

Unfortunately, though, our holy land with Jerusalem the Holy City, is today a land of conflict.

Those who love Jerusalem have every will to work and make it a land and a city of peace, life and dignity for all its inhabitants. The prayers of all believers in it — the three religions and two peoples who belong to this city — rise to God and ask for peace, as the Psalmist says: "Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see!" (Psalms 80:14). Inspire our leaders, and fill their minds and hearts with justice and peace.

Mr. President, we have been following, with concern, the reports about the possibility of changing how the United States understands and deals with the status of Jerusalem. We are certain that such steps will yield increased hatred, conflict, violence and suffering in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, moving us farther from the goal of unity and deeper toward destructive division. We ask from you Mr. President to help us all walk towards more love and a definitive peace, which cannot be reached without Jerusalem being for all.

Our solemn advice and plea is for the United States to continue recognizing the present international status of Jerusalem. Any sudden changes would cause irreparable harm. We are confident that, with strong support from our friends, Israelis and Palestinians can work towards negotiating a sustainable and just peace, benefiting all who long for the Holy City of Jerusalem to fulfil its destiny. The Holy City can be shared and fully enjoyed once a political process helps liberate the hearts of all people who live

within it, from the conditions of conflict and destructiveness that they are experiencing.

Christmas is upon us soon. It is a feast of peace. The Angels have sung in our sky: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the people of good will. In this coming Christmas, we plea for Jerusalem not to be deprived from peace, we ask you Mr. President to help us listen to the song of the angels. As the Christian leaders of Jerusalem, we invite you to walk with us in hope as we build a just, inclusive peace for all the peoples of this unique and Holy City.

With our best regards, and best wishes for a Merry Christmas

+ Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate
+ Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
+ Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
+ Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Archbishop Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
+ Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite Catholic Patriarchate

+ Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
+ Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
+ Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
+ Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
+ Msgr. Georges Dankaye', Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

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2. Weeping for Jerusalem: A Theological Meditation

13 See Pope John Paul II, apostolic letter, *Redemptionis anno* (1984) in Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History* (Fordham, 2007), Appendix, 203-07.

14 See Sabbah, "The Mystery of the Palestinian Christian Vocation" in Drew Christiansen, S. J. and Saliba Sarsar, eds. *Faithful Witness: On Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land* (Hyde Park, NY 2009), 165-167. Also, in the same

volume see "Jerusalem," 100-108, and "Easter Gratitude and the Future," 168-190.

15 "The Mystery," 166.

16 Tobit, 13:1-18.

17 Idem. v. 4-5, 6.

18 Luke 13:33.

19 Luke 9:51; 13:33.

20 Luke 13:41.

21 Luke 19:43-44. The commentary in the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford, 2011) agrees the description refers to Titus's levelling of the city in the year 70 without further comment. On Christian dialogue with Israeli Jews, see Sabbah, "Reading the Bible in the Land of the Bible," especially nos. 53-58, and "Faith," nos. 32-38 in *Faithful Witness*.

22 According to Luke Timothy Johnson, Luke could have gathered the military tactics he lists from the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, and not from Josephus' account of the siege of Jerusalem as many have proposed. See Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, *Sacra Pagina*, v. 3, Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Glazier/Liturgical, 1991) 298-99, n. 43.

23 "The prophet's arrival should be God's vitiation for peace. But because he is not recognized as such, his rejection becomes a 'visitation' of punishment." Ibid., n. 44.

24 On the women from Galilee, see Luke 8: 2-3; 23:49; 24: 1-8.

25 See Johnson, p. 372, note 28.

26 See Bradford Hinze, "Ecclesial Impasse: What We Can Learn from Our Discontents," *Theological Studies*, 73:3 (September 2011); also for a summary of Hinze's thought, see Thomas C. Fox, "Prophecy 'out of the struggles and laments of the faithful," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 13, 2010 at https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/prophecy-out-struggles-and-laments-faithful.

27 See *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* (Israel/Palestine Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)/and printed and distributed by the Friends of Sabeel — North America, 2009), 1.1, 16. A pdf of the document may also be found at: http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/files/English.pdf.

28 Ibid. 1.1-8, 13-14.

29 Ibid., 5.1, 20.

30 This last year what has most concerned the Heads of Churches has been violence around the *Haram al-Sharif* and the threat it presented to the "Status Quo," the legal arrangement guaranteeing the sanctity of Jerusalem's Holy Places for the three faiths. See "Jerusalem Needs Special Status" in Christian Situation in the Holy Land, Volume 6: Sharing the Journey, Jeffrey M. Abood, KC*HS, ed., 6-7, 9.

31 Ibid., no. 7, 22. The appeal for repentance from "fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people" was aimed at certain fundamentalist churches and pastors who are strong supporters of Israel, no. 6.1, 21.

32 *Kairos* received support from the Friends of Sabeel, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., and an independent American initiative called *Kairos* U.S.A. aimed primarily at U.S. evangelicals in response to Christian Zionism. (See http://kairosusa.org/about-kairosusa/ where you will find a link to "Call to Action: U.S. Response to the Kairos Palestine Document.")

33 For the Holy See's expectations for Jerusalem, see "Jerusalem Needs Special Status" in *Christian Situation*, 5-8. On recent developments in Jerusalem, see 6-7. Also, Sabbah, "Jerusalem" in *Faithful Witness*, 100-108.

34 Kassas, "The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question," Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, July 25, 2017.

35 For expressions of repentance in biblical lamentation, see Lamentations 5:7 and 19-21, Tobit 13:1-6.

36 On (nonviolent) resistance, see "*Kairos* Palestine," 3.2. Also, see Sabbah, "Reading the Bible in the Land of the Bible," especially III. 2. "Violence in the Bible," nos. 35-46, and particularly nos. 45-46, in *Faithful Witness*, 41-45. On reconciliation, see "*Kairos* Palestine," 3.3.4: "These forces for justice and reconciliation have not yet been able to transform the situation of injustice, but they have their influence and may shorten the time of suffering and hasten the time of reconciliation." Also, see Sabbah, "Peace, Justice and Forgiveness" in *Faithful Witness*, 155-164.

8. Jerusalem: City of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection

37 Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, "Contemporary Way of the Cross: A Liturgical Journey along the Palestinian Via Dolorosa," (Jerusalem: Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, 2011), 4.

38 Origen, *Comm. Joann.* 1.28 (fr.640).

39 The "Status Quo Legislation of the Holy Places" was defined in 1757, codified in 1852 and 1853, and issued as Ottoman decrees or *firmans*. While they offered clarity regarding access, custodianship, and timing of services, L.G.A. Cust commented on the struggles that necessitated the codification in the first place: "If the Holy Places and the rights pertaining thereto are an 'expression of men's feelings about Him whose story hallowed those sites,' they are also an index of the corruptions and intrigues of despots and chancelleries during eight hundred years. The logical results have been the spirit of distrust and suspicion, and the attitude of intractability in all matters, even if only of the most trivial importance, concerning the Holy Places." L.G.A. Cust, *The Status Quo and the Holy Places* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1980), 3.

40 "Pope Francis and Patriarch of Jerusalem urge defending Status Quo," Press Centre, WCC, 27 October 2017.

41 Jeff Halper, *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting dispossession, Redeeming Israel* (London, Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2008), 141-174.

42 Jalal Abukhater, "The slow killing of Jerusalem," *Electronic Intifada* (July 25, 2017).

43 Naim Ateek, "The Future of Palestinian Christianity," in *The Forgotten Faithful: A Window into the Life and Witness of Christians in the Holy Land,* ed. Naim Ateek, Cedar Duaybis, and Maurine Tobin (Jerusalem: Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, 2007), 149.

44 Jean Zaru, "The Challenges and Witness of Palestinian Christians," in *The Forgotten Faithful,* 28.

45 Ibid.

46 See, for example, Mary Elizabeth King, *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Revolution* (New York: Nation Books, 2007).

47 See Melanie A. May, *Jerusalem Testament: Palestinian Christians Speak, 1988-2008* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010).

12. Jerusalem Is For All

48 Edward W. Said. "Projecting Jerusalem" *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXV, no 1 (Autumn 1995): 5-14.

49 Junno Arocho Esteves. "Update: Pope concerned by U.S. move to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital," *Catholic News Agency* (December 6, 2017): http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2017/pope-concerned-by-us-move-to-recognize-jerusalem-as-israels-capital.cfm.

50 Holy See Press Office. "Comunicato della Sala Stampa della Santa Sede," (December 10, 2017): http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/12/10/0886/01900.html.

13. Memories of Jerusalem

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52 Ibid.

22. Living My Faith in Jerusalem

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56 Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1981). (Original work was published in 1963), 49.

57 Ibid., 54

58 Ibid., 53.

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CHRISTIANITY, PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS, AND OTHER CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM
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HOLY LAND CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL FOUNDATION (HCEF)

HCEF Mission Statement

HCEF is committed to the continued presence, empowerment and well-being of Arab Christians in the Holy Land and to developing the bonds of solidarity between them and Christians worldwide.

HCEF Core Values

Our mission and core values underpin everything we do. Whether we are designing programs, putting together a conference or disseminating news from the Holy Land or from parishes around the U.S. and elsewhere, we look at whether we embody these values. These core tenets give our programs the roots they need to sustain the work when challenges arise. HCEF is:

- Ecumenical

From the very beginning, HCEF has been an ecumenical organization. There are multiple Christian denominations in the Holy Land, and our programs aim at supporting all of them. We encourage Palestinian Christians to be ecumenical in their outreach to Christians around the world, and we encourage HCEF's supporters to be ecumenical in their prayers and support. Because Christians in the Holy Land comprise less than 2 percent of the population, it is important that they build their support for one another on the Christian faith they share.

- Based on Christian Faith

It is a core belief of Christians that we are one mystical Body in Christ. We want all of our work to reflect that unity and to demonstrate that if any part of the body suffers, we all suffer. By the same belief, we also demonstrate that when one part of the body rejoices, we all rejoice.

- Dedicated to Peace and Justice

We firmly believe that a just peace in the Holy Land is the only long-term solution to the difficult living conditions that have led many Christians to emigrate. We encourage the work of those who help bridge the distance between the political factions that exacerbate the situation in the Holy Land.

- Service-Oriented

Each person at HCEF seeks to be a servant leader following the example of Jesus Christ. We serve both the Christians in

the Holy Land and our amazingly generous supporters around the world. We want each person who interacts with us to feel that we have given them our full attention, and we want each of our programs to reflect the importance of interpersonal connections.

- Transparent

We want our work to be transparent. We want people to understand how we build relationships between Holy Land Christians and how each of our programs operates. We want HCEF supporters to connect in personal ways with the Christians whom they support in the Holy Land.

HCEF Goals

HCEF lives its mission and core values by witnessing the teaching of our Savior Jesus Christ.

- We educate people around the world about the presence of Arab Christians in the Holy Land and remind them of their moral, practical and spiritual obligation to the Mother Church.
- We build community between Christians throughout the world and Arab Christians of the Holy Land through communication, publications, pilgrimages and other joint endeavors.
- We develop bonds of solidarity through church-to-church, family-to-family and person-to-person

partnership programs in order to bring Christians together in community for future

- We promote peace, justice, interfaith dialogue and reconciliation in the Holy Land by removing the causes of suffering and replacing despair with hope, fear with human security and humiliation with dignity.
- We undertake specific projects designed to empower Arab Christians and advance better living conditions in the Holy Land. Projects focus on creating economic opportunities, advancing education, building and renovating houses and developing the healthy growth of children.

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"Let us work together to replace despair with HOPE, fear with HUMAN SECURITY, and humiliation with DIGNITY"

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COORDINATING CATHOLIC AID ORGANIZATIONS IN THE HOLY LAND (CCAO)

CCAO was established with the Pastoral Plan of the Diocesan Synod of the Catholic Churches in the Holy Land in 2000. Section 15 of the Pastoral Plan under the heading "The Presence of our Churches in the World of Human Suffering," provides for the "creation of a higher council of institutions working in the area of human suffering for coordination and collaboration." In compliance with the Pastoral Plan decision number 6, it was determined by the Catholic Aid organizations to create the "Coordinating Catholic Aid Organizations in the Holy Land" (CCAO) and to be associated with the Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land (ACOHL).

CCAO members cover a considerable share of the social services and welfare work in the Holy Land. As such, these organizations are better positioned to report the realities "on-the-ground" and the daily life of the people. In almost every field, in almost every region, Catholic institutions are a strong support base for local communities and are ready to share their experiences with interested visitors.

Goals of CCAO

- Enhance mutual support among its members.
- Enhance communication and share information freely to provide aid and support in a more effective and efficient way without duplication of services.
- Refer cases to other CCAO member organizations according to expertise, knowledge, experience, and capacity to deal with circumstances or situations of need.
- Encourage coordination and cooperation of efforts in the service of God and all His people in the Holy Land: striving to realize a common vision and following the principles of Catholic Social Teaching on Solidarity, Subsidiary Human Dignity, Social Justice, and Options for the poor.

CCAO Members

Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (LPJ)
Bethlehem University (BU)
Caritas Baby Hospital (CBH)
Caritas Jerusalem (CJ)
Catholic Relief Service (CRS)
Custody of the Holy Land (Cust.OFM)
Deutscher Verein vom Heiligen Lande (DVHL)
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